NOW & THEN

THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

CENTER FOR APPALACHIAN STUDIES AND SERVICES EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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Getting Around APPALACHIA

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NOW & THEN

Now & Then remembers a dramatic trip around the base paths, when Pittsburgh Pirates second baseman Bill Mazeroski, a native of Wheeling, West Virginia, hit a bottom-of-the-ninth-inning home run to end the World Series just over 50 years ago, on October 13, 1960. The Pirates defeated the New York Yankees in game seven at Forbes Field in Pittsburgh. The time on the Longines clock read 3:37 p.m. when Mazeroski slammed a ball over the left field fence and broke into a wild, helmet-waving run around the bases, to be engulfed at home plate by teammates and fans. The score: Pirates 10, Yankees 9. Pittsburgh was the only team Mazeroski ever played for, and he remains on the team's payroll today.

Left: 1965 baseball card.Card courtesy Fred Sauceman.
Right: Mazeroski in 2010. Photo courtesy the Pittsburgh Pirates office.

Cover photo courtesy Charlie Warden. The Linn Cove Viaduct on Grandfather Mountain was the last link of the Blue Ridge Parkway because the Morton family objected to the environmental damage that the road bed would incur on the mountain. It took years to "get around" the problem by "going around" the mountain with this engineering feat that had a much lower impact on the environment.

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Editor Fred Sauceman
Managing Editor Randy Sanders
Poetry Editor Marianne Worthington
Book Editor Edwina Pendarvis
Music Editor Wayne Winkler
Film Editor Brad Lifford
Photo Editor Charlie Warden
Center Director Roberta Herrin

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Visit us at www.etsu.edu/cass
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Center for Appalachian Studies & Services
ETSU Box 70556
Johnson City, TN 37614-1707

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The Greening of Appalachia
By March 31, 2011

Serving Appalachia
By August 31, 2011

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NOW & THEN
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THE LINGUISTICS OF GETTING AROUND APPALACHIA

Roberta Herrin
Director, Center for Appalachian Studies and Services

"Get around." The phrase denotes movement from one place to another, but it is also a common colloquialism. You might say, "I'll get around to fixing that hinge directly." (Directly. Now, that's a good word.) As a child, I was frequently admonished, "If you don't get around, we're going to be late!" In short, "You better hurry." Or you might ask, "How are you going to get around that problem?" The question could mean "How are you going to avoid that problem?" Or it could mean "How are you going to work that out?" There is also the conundrum: "I just can't get my head around that idea." Finally, the supportive connotation: "We need to get around that family and help them out."

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, surveyor William Byrd got around. If you don't believe me, just read his *Secret Diary*. Though not an Appalachian, he penned a description in his now famous *History of the Dividing Line, Between Virginia and North Carolina as Run in 1728-29* that stuck to the region: sloth, alcoholism, spousal abuse. Such characteristics of the "Lubberlanders" defined a region to avoid—to get around. The same characteristics intrigued and, ultimately, invited the nation to "get its head around" Appalachia. Leisure travelers, botanists, and geographers traversed the region on foot, on horseback, by boat, and by wagon, hoping to fathom its unique features.

Some famous Appalachians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries "got around," whether they knew it or not. The 1964 Beach Boys hit "I Get Around" could have been written for the likes of Boone and Crockett. They got "bugged driving up and down the same old strip" and set out to "find a new place where the kids are hip." They could say with confidence, "My buddies and me are getting real well known; yeah, the bad guys know us and they leave us alone."

Concurrent with the Beach Boys' number one hit (1963-1965), an entire federal agency, the Appalachian Regional Commission, was being created that changed getting around the region forever. Without question, the ARC improved transportation. Without question, the ARC made it impossible to sidestep this chunk of United States geography. Since the mid-sixties, it has been impossible to disregard a region perceived to be isolated, poverty stricken, and vulnerable to myriad ills, from floods to mining disasters.

During the 1960s and 1970s, publications and organizations flourished in a movement to get around the region in every sense of the phrase: to traverse it, to define it, to explore it, to hurry it up, to understand it. Some of us get around the region to fend off inaccuracy, attack, or abuse, especially in the media. Remember the outrage in 1992 when the *Kentucky Cycle* won a Pulitzer and in 2003 when Dub Cornett proposed a Beverly Hillbillies reality show?

From the 1700s to the present, Appalachia has been a patch of ground to be reckoned with. Motivated by history, curiosity, passion, reverence, and, sometimes, plain old indignation, we get around Appalachia. ❖

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Fred Sauceman

The panoramic sweep of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, seen from atop Mount Washington has been described by *USA Weekend* magazine as "the second most beautiful view in America." But, true to the spirit of Pittsburgh, that captivating view of the Golden Triangle and its three rivers has a practical side. For about 140 years, citizens have been transported up the steep slopes of the mountain by means of inclines, sometimes called funiculars. As I occupied a seat inside the Duquesne Incline and watched steel cables pull the red car up to the point where that view is most dramatic, the theme for this issue emerged: "Getting Around Appalachia."

While there are usually more cameras than lunch pails on the Monongahela and Duquesne inclines nowadays, their history is shaped less by tourism and more by the utilitarian need to get to and from home and work when there's a mountain to negotiate.

Appalachian terrain begets Appalachian ingenuity. Our topography explains our passion for the machines we use to traverse that land.

In this issue, we read of the emotional connection between driver and International big rig. Of a 1938 Ford half-ton pickup that jarred walnuts off trees, hauled hay for horses and goats, hugged ancient bridges, and made it all the way to the year 2001 before it was swept away by a Fayette County, West Virginia, flood. A writer recalls her family's 1950 trek to a tourist home in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in a black Cadillac hearse for summer vacation, while a blues singer in East Tennessee, with RHYTHM on his license plate, navigates a Lincoln Town Car to his plebeian gigs.

"Getting Around" also suggested girth, and we dispatched Carter Taylor Seaton to investigate Huntington, West Virginia's reputation for over-eating. She found, by the way, that the number of pizza shops in Huntington once exceeded the number of health clubs in the entire state. As a counterpoint to her story of British food revolutionary Jamie Oliver's attempt to reform the city, I include my tribute to a plate of mettwurst and beans, with chili, onions, relish, raw horseradish, and pumpernickel bread—a repast that has been lapped up by residents of Knoxville, Tennessee, since 1939.

The "Getting Around" theme encompasses the new—the ziplines that propel people over treetops—as well as the primeval—thirteen old footbridges that survive in Western North Carolina, their destinations now deadend roads and private property.

Writer Michael Joslin decries the spoilage of one of humankind's most ancient modes of getting around—the river—with silt and sedimentation from commercial construction smothering wildlife and making it sadly possible to cross North Carolina's Elk, in some spots, without as much as a wet sock.

As these stories show, "Getting Around" means both a dangerous domination of nature and a wondrous reveling in its glories. ❖

GETTING AROUND

A major rockslide in southwestern North Carolina during the fall of 2009 caused significant economic losses to the affected areas by closing segments of two Appalachian highways, according to a new Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) study. The rockslide, which occurred on October 25 in Haywood County, North Carolina, resulted in the closure of a section of Interstate 40 near the Tennessee state line.

The study, undertaken by HDR Decision Economics for ARC, assessed the loss to business in the areas directly affected by the road closures. It also assessed the overall increase in transportation costs.

To determine the extent of business loss, HDR conducted a series of interviews with local businesses and development experts. They reported that business activity through April 1, 2010, in the affected areas decreased by 25 to 30 percent. ❖

This article is an excerpt from the Appalachian Regional Commission's study published in May of 2010.

Aerial view of I-40 rock slide. Photo courtesy NCDOT Photogrammetry Unit.

RAY

Margaret S. Carr

Getting around for most of us usually means driving a car, van, or pickup truck. For the men and women who deliver goods to our local stores and warehouses, it means driving what they call a big rig.

Ray Shipley was one of those men. He was a kid from near Washington College in Washington County, Tennessee, who grew up essentially with no mother or father. He carried water to road builders in Elizabethton and sold papers on the streets of Johnson City when he was a small child. As a teenager he worked on a farm on Stoney Creek in Carter County and "hoboed" out west during the Depression.

Ray drove a truck before there was power steering, power brakes, and queen-sized sleepers. He hauled coal and produce in a truck of his own and drove for small companies and other truck owners until about 1950. Eventually, he became a "local" driver for companies such as Southern States Co-op and then began an adventure as an independent contractor (owner-operator). This meant that he owned his tractor and leased his truck and his services to a shipping company. Loads were assigned by dispatchers who were contacted on the WATS line phone number. The pay rate was by the mile. Loaded miles paid more than empty ones, and deadhead miles (driving the truck with no trailer) paid nearly nothing. By the early 1960s, he had accumulated enough financing to purchase his first tractor, a Diamond T. He was so proud of that first truck. He even had a picture made with his youngest daughter standing in front of it. He drove this truck for about five years. They wear out pretty quickly, and usually by the time the loan is paid, the truck is ready to be traded. His next truck was a cab-over International, which outlasted the term of the bank loan. He kept it in operation long enough to have it painted, from red to blue.

For most of the 1960s, Ray was leased to Refrigerated Transport out of Atlanta, Georgia. He carried refrigerated and frozen foods such as Kraft products and Mrs. Smith's pies. For a number of years he also hauled swinging meat, the big sides of beef that were hung from the ceiling of the trailer on gigantic hooks. These were very dangerous loads to haul; the meat would swing and affect the trailer much as a tanker filled with liquid would sway. Around 1970, Ray finally had to trade the International for a new GMC. He also

Ray sitting on his truck. Photo courtesy Margaret S. Carr.

changed companies, leasing to Crete Carrier Corporation in Nebraska. He began hauling things like dog food, nuts, and rugs. Crete was a good company that paid well and on time. When Ray retired, the company retired his tractor number, 609.

He made up for extended absences on the road by bringing home overages from the load. While he drove for Refrigerated, he brought home to the neighborhood canned biscuits, frozen pies, turkey breasts, and fish sandwich patties, as well as the first tangelos. His daughter recalls, "When Daddy brought home the canned biscuits, he had had to carry them in the cab of the truck. They got pretty warm, and as we were carrying them into the house, some of the cans began to explode. It was like having doughy fireworks in the house."

The negative side to this arrangement was that if anything happened to the load or if it were short, the owner/operator would have to pay the expense. Once a hired driver was assigned to check the temperature on the Thermo-King (refrigeration unit) on the trailer, which was full of bananas. The driver apparently didn't read the thermometer correctly and let the temperature go below freezing. There's not much anyone can do with a trailer-load of frozen bananas. Ray's daughter remembers, "I thought Mama would have a heart attack when she found out about that." After the episode, bananas did not appear on the household grocery list very often.

Ray did not hire drivers frequently; most of the time he drove on his own. But while he was leased to Crete, he would occasionally get the "cigarette run." This was a trip from North Carolina to California and back, in one week. The cigarette companies apparently wanted to have the loads guarded at all times, so a second driver became necessary. Most of the drivers were good workers. Some wanted the adventure of seeing the country, some wanted to gain experience driving, and some were family men who just needed an income. Some were looking for women, and others were probably running from something. One was stopped for driving down the wrong side of the Interstate once, and another ripped a five-foot-long tear in the side of a trailer. Ray was of the opinion that a few, like the banana load person, were more trouble than they were worth.

Ray, as an owner/operator, was essentially running a small business that required managing every aspect including personnel (drivers), equipment (trucks, trailers, accessories), finances (income, expenses, taxes), and planning (timely arrivals, minimized "down" time). Fortunately, Ray's wife, Maude, had a good business head, and their skills complemented each other. She made sure all the bills were paid, that permits and tags were purchased, and that the ledgers were in order for income tax time. Each spring, the kitchen table in their house would be inaccessible; it would be covered with different kinds of tickets (receipts) for fuel, tires, repairs,

unloading, permits, and drivers. Each sort of expense had a section in the ledger book, and she kept meticulous records, all without the benefit of adding machines or calculators.

In addition to learning how to sort business receipts, Ray's children learned at an early age how to read a road map. Old road atlases became toys, and trips were plotted to everywhere in the lower forty-eight. It was also exciting to ride to town in the big truck. His daughter, Mary, says, "It was just fun to watch him change gears and to learn how to back it up. You are so high up and you can see everything and it was fun to bounce up and down in the passenger seat."

The truck was like a big climbing toy. Ray's daughter recalls, "When the truck was serviced, the garage would grease the fifth wheel, leaving it looking like gigantic worms had crawled onto it. We had to wash it with an extension rod attached to the hose, and we never could clean the very top."

Ray kept all his receipts and change in a Hav-a-Tampa cigar box on the dashboard. Helping clean out the truck when he came home meant the kids could keep whatever money they found. He also brought home souvenirs and treasures—trinkets from each state, transistor radios, and Mexican money. One of the gifts he brought his wife was a beautifully-tooled leather purse, which she kept on display only and never carried.

With Ray on the road, there were many birthdays, Thanksgivings, and Christmases with only telephone calls, but Mary says the worst part was that "it was boring and we never got to go anywhere because he was gone and we had to ride in a taxi to go to the grocery store."

During runs, Ray essentially lived in the truck, sleeping on a twin-sized mattress in the sleeper. He ate

Ray's daughter Mary in front of his International Harvester truck in 1963. Photo courtesy Margaret S. Carr.

truck stop food and liked stopping at one restaurant where a myna bird would say, "Cup of coffee, Joe," every time it heard the door open. He knew the places with the best eggs or coffee and the ones that offered cash discounts or S&H green stamps. These truck stops became like oases on the Interstates. Ray covered forty-eight states and often joked that if there were a bridge to Hawaii, he would go there, too.

Ray drove for years without having an accident or jackknifing his trailer, and he received numerous safety awards from the freight companies. He spent long, lonely days with only an AM radio for company, driving in sweltering heat with a little fan on the dash or in cold that could barely be affected by the heater.

Truckers like Ray had to contend with toll roads, low overpasses, restricted roads, and use taxes. Adding to the stress of the road, he drove during one of the most turbulent times in American history, into towns that were experiencing race riots and war protests. He told of having people stand in front of his truck trying to make him stop on the south side of Chicago, East St. Louis, and warehouse areas in Los Angeles. Even though he was not a member of the Teamsters or other unions, he stayed at home during one particularly violent strike as a safety precaution. His daughter says, "It would have been dangerous because the strikers would have seen him as a scab or a wildcatter. I think Mama made him stay off the road during those strikes because she was afraid he might be shot or have a rock thrown off an overpass onto the truck."

Even though they endured bad weather, loneliness, fatigue, and the general dangers of the road, many men of Ray's age say truck-driving was a lifesaver. The industry was growing, and driving a truck provided a good income and steady employment. Ray was part of the truck- driving generation who were the real "Kings of the Road"—professionals who were safe and courteous. He retired before the advent of CB radios and cell phones and at the beginning of deregulation. He was fortunate to have seen most of the country—even if it was from a highway—and to have met hundreds of people, some of whom surely became his friends. No other life would have suited him. ❖

Margaret S. Carr is a native of Carter County, Tennessee, where she resides with her daughter Lydia. She has worked at East Tennessee State University for over twenty-five years.

MY FATHER MAKES THE BEANS

Linda Parsons Marion

In the five o'clock glint, the man stopped
behind me, gray and slack jawed, looks
down at a map or the crescent of his thumbnail.
He slumps to the steering wheel, and I see
he is falling asleep—idling on the I-40 ramp,
around us the zinging arrows of traffic.

I wonder if someone waits with pot roast
and new potatoes, will bring him a drink,
rub his temples. I wonder what words he used
for work as the car warmed up on frosty mornings
and pajamaed children clung to his pants legs.
My father, leaving for a sales convention,
would say: *I'm going to make the beans.*

As he fights to awaken and retake the road,
I see it is my father. Traveling to his night job
at the mall, he is napping in his Silver Bullet,
pearly Eldorado he could not afford
but could not resist.

Work is the come-hither he answers,
creased suits he is known by, curvaceous
wood he enters and prowls. The beans he made
for our table, once magic and uncountable,
now barely keep the giant from grinding
his bones to bread.

An old dream shaken off, he drives into
the harsh light, customers needing what only
he can give. Again I am waving on the steps
until he's a dot on the hill, squaring his shoulders
against the world of fathers whose lifeblood
tars the highway like the false gold of heaven.

Linda Parsons Marion served as poetry editor of *Now & Then* for fourteen years and is an editor at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Her latest poetry collection is *Mother Land* (Iris Press).

THE RED DEMON

MARGARET M. NAVA

Shortly after moving to our 250-acre farm in the hollows of West Virginia, my husband Richard and I realized driving our custom-painted, chrome-wheeled, leather-upholstered pickup through the fields, across the river, and up the ridges was not good use of a costly investment. We needed something we could knock around in, something that could withstand the weather, rough handling, and neglect generally associated with farm work. We needed what one neighbor called a "farm use" truck.

"My cousin Darrell up in Lost Creek has a truck he's been wanting to sell," said the neighbor. "I think he's only asking two or three hundred for it."

"Two or three hundred?" I asked. "Does it even run?"

"Most of the time," chuckled the neighbor.

"When can we go look at this truck?" I asked innocently.

"How's tomorrow?" replied the neighbor.

Even by West Virginia standards where everything is just up the road or a stone's throw away, it took almost two hours to reach the cousin's farm. When we arrived, it appeared no one was home. That, however, didn't bother my neighbor, who slipped on a pair of rubber galoshes and started across the cow pasture where Darrell's truck was parked.

Three cows nibbled the tall grass around the truck while a bull monitored the situation from the shelter of a huge black walnut tree. Feeling a bit nervous and perhaps even a little terrified, I stood back and watched as my neighbor trudged toward the vehicle.

One of the truck's mud-splattered bumpers lay in the clumpy grass. The other, dented and looking as if it had been through a war, hung on by sheer willpower. All four tires were flat, the top of the rounded cab was crushed, the grill was bashed in, and both doors were open—rusted through and in need of handles. There were no windows, and the upholstery, or what was left of it, was shredded and recycled into several large nests. For what animal, I didn't know.

Keeping one eye on the bull and the other on the ground ahead, I moved in closer to the truck. "How old is this thing?"

"She's a 1938."

"How can you tell?"

Cars, let alone trucks, have always been a complete mystery to me. Obviously proud to be able to teach his city slicker neighbor something she didn't know,

Illustration by Charlie Warden based on photograph courtesy John Hayes.

the neighbor grinned. "The grill is oval. Before 1938, they were oblong. And notice the hood? It was the first conventional front-opening truck hood in the industry." I shook my head in utter amazement. "This truck is older than me."

The neighbor nodded. "You'll have to check out the brakes," he said. "And the clutch and transmission as well. Maybe your husband could get some used tires from the co-op."

He stroked the truck's battered hood affectionately. "This here's a 1938 Ford half-ton pickup. It has a V-8 engine, a 9.125-inch dry single pressure plate clutch, worm and roller steering, and a completely redesigned bed, the first since 1931."

I didn't understand a thing the neighbor was telling me, but the way he spoke convinced me that this would be the perfect truck for getting around our rocky little farm.

Two days later, after patching the tires and filling them with air, Cousin Darrell hooked a chain to the truck's undercarriage and towed it to our farm. When my husband pulled out his wallet to pay for the truck, Darrell shook his head in protest. "Put your money away, I'm just glad to get this thing out of my field. Them cows was beginning to take a shine to it."

Richard laughed and slipped the wallet back into his pocket. "Thank you, Darrell, that's mighty neighborly of you."

Darrell blushed and shuffled his feet. "Gotta run. Dropped the wife off in town before I come out here and I gotta pick her up before she throws a fit."

Richard spent the next two weeks getting the truck back into running order. The engine and clutch were okay, but the brakes, transmission, fuel pump, and radiator all had to be replaced. Running short on funds, he decided to repair the upholstery and windows later. He placed a sheet of plywood over what was left of the bench seat and covered it with a padded furniture blanket a previous owner had left behind in our barn. Although the blanket reeked of cat urine and had holes chewed in several places, it would suffice until we could afford something better. As for the truck's exterior, Richard and I washed away years of grime, Bondoed as many holes as possible, and tried to pop the dents out of the doors and cab. After we replaced the bumpers with two-by-fours and attached secondhand door handles purchased from the local auto parts store, the truck was ready to go.

I stood back and eyed the antiquated eyesore suspiciously. Its once red finish was weather-beaten and pitted and sported patches of some gray, putty-like material. The words "farm use" were painted across both doors.

"Do you think it's safe?" I asked.

"I don't know," replied Richard. "Let's take her for a ride and find out."

Crawling into the truck, I noticed there were no seatbelts. "Isn't it against the law to ride without seatbelts?"

He stroked the truck's battered hood affectionately. "This here's a 1938 Ford half-ton pickup. It has a V-8 engine, a 9.125-inch dry single pressure plate clutch, worm and roller steering, and a completely redesigned bed, the first since 1931."

"Only if you're out on the open road," Richard said. "Right now, all we're going to do is cross over the bridge and head up the hill to the top of the ridge. What can happen?"

Not even trying to hide my fear, I braced myself against the dashboard and held tight to the passenger door. As the truck bounced across the wooden bridge, I looked out the window at the river below. Luckily, the water running through it was nothing more than a stream. If the truck broke down on the bridge and fell into the water, we probably wouldn't drown.

As we began our steep climb to the top of the ridge, the engine stalled. After several tries, Richard was able to get it started again, but when he engaged first gear, the truck slid backwards. Gunning the engine, he regained control and continued up the hill. A short way farther, the right front tire bounced into and then out of a deep groundhog hole, sending me flying toward the roof and causing me temporarily to loosen my death grip.

I began thinking Richard was making a game of the whole episode because, for the next ten minutes, it seemed as if he hit every rock, every tree stump, every hole he could find on that hill. When we reached the ridge, I refused to let go. Afraid to move, I didn't even turn my head to face my husband. "This isn't a truck," I shrieked. "It's a red demon."

Roaring with laughter, Richard slapped the steering wheel. "You know something? You're right. And I think that's just about the greatest name anyone could come up with."

From then on, the dilapidated truck was called the Red Demon.

Over the years, we used the Red Demon to haul hay to our horses and goats, to bump the trunks of black walnut trees to get the nuts to drop, to haul rocks from the river to build a stone wall, and to haul garbage to the local dump. We never washed it. We added more rust and dents. We replaced only those parts that were essential to its basic operation. And since it seldom left our property, we never licensed it. The Red Demon served its purpose as a "farm use" truck, even if I never felt safe riding in it.

The Red Demon went to its final reward in the summer of 2001 when floods threatened the home of friends down in Fayette County.

Following a series of violent storms that dropped as much as 11 inches of rain on southern West Virginia, at least 1,500 families lost their homes and thousands of others suffered extensive damage, including our friends whose living room walls bore high water marks, whose fence and chicken coop had floated down the nearby creek, and whose garden patch was covered in silt and chunks of coal.

We slapped a temporary license plate on the Red Demon and drove her down to our friends' farm, hoping we could help haul away some of the debris. When we arrived in the early morning, the sun had been shining. But by mid-afternoon, storm clouds filled the sky. Without warning, the skies opened up, rain poured down in dense sheets, and the thunder and lightning started.

Leaving their trucks, everyone made a mad dash for shelter. In a matter of minutes, the creek erupted from a gentle trickle to a raging torrent. Fallen trees, discarded tires, empty plastic milk bottles, and fast-food containers floated down its water. As the rain continued, the creek swelled and overran its banks. Out of nowhere, the roof of a small house slammed into the side of our truck. The churning water raised the truck off the ground, spun it in frantic circles, and swiftly whisked it away.

As our battered truck floated down the creek, I couldn't help but think that the Red Demon, wherever she came to rest, had finally redeemed herself. More than just another truck, she had become a member of my household and, as such, would forever have a place in my heart. ❖

Margaret M. Nava, a retired West Virginia goat farmer, now lives and writes in New Mexico.

DESTINATION COUNTRY ROADS

Ben E. Campbell

They lived so far back in the holler that the sunshine got hauled in on the mail truck. This arrangement not so much by choice, really, as by economic circumstance. Poor folks tend to get shoved off that way. Of course, I didn't know my grandparents were "poor" then, in my 1980s childhood, back before the outsiders took to gobbling up the backlands. *Escapism* it would become. Given the factors, though, my naïveté was well within reason.

Firstly, my parents were of the same class—most everyone in our chain of hills fell safely in that class, the working class. Likewise, my grandfather drove the nicest truck around, or so it seemed at the time, as it sometimes strikes me even now. A 1970 short-bed Chevy lacquered black with berry-red interior, it turned out to be the only new thing he owned. But in those early Reagan years, when he was toting me around, traipsing back roads in our county, a 1970 model truck was hardly new. It just looked that way. "Take care of things," my grandfather taught me, "and they will last you all your lifetime." The truck stood as proof.

It wasn't so much the truck's glamour I adored as the company it kept and the places where it took us. West Virginia, minus the scars of mountaintop removal, is a place of endless beauty. Ridges sprout up toward the skyline in a natural state of reach, as if the oceans never carved them, but instead they rose from seeds. And of all it has to offer, from point to rugged point, its muse sings most in Greenbrier County, one of the last places where dirt roads run abundant, where "Country Roads" rings true with every bellowed chorus. With borders stretching over 1,000 square miles, it's an area of seemingly large proportions. Learning its roads is a futile task for most, but my grandfather knew them all. He memorized them, a feat quite impressive given the limits of his time. When he was a child, the roads hadn't even made it up his holler. There ran an old wagon trail, impassable by car or truck, from his village into town. Once a week, the mountaineers who lived that far out crossed the ruts and gullies in mule-drawn wagons to barter goods. This during the Depression, when a roadway seemed a waste.

The roads eventually came, though. Prosperity built them up, drove them deep into the mountains—whitewashed and graveled until the rains would wash them out. My grandfather got a job, bought a truck, explored their boundless trails. By the time I would join the flock, he had rambled all he could, all over the county and the state. Only a stint up north left room for new adventure.

But the roads there proved nowhere near the same. Soon back home and fully settled, he resumed his favorite pastime, scaling roads now mapped inside his head.

I was abruptly recruited as a sidekick. Little did I know then, craning my head to clear the dash, what

The author's grandfather in his truck. Photo courtesy Ben E. Campbell.

wonders would brush my budding senses. Even the pre-drive rituals held a heightened sense of awe. The checking of oil, the tuning of the CB radio, the wiping of the glass, all done with conscious care. And the last before we started, the fitting of his gloves, the black leather shining through a stream of hill-leaked light. Turn some Johnny Cash up and we were well on our way.

The real thrill came when the wheels began to turn. With no destination in mind (the roads were all the same—endless and curvy), we never knew where the tires would likely stop. We might pick berries by the roadside or mosey into town, grab a hamburger, some cornbread and beans, then slip back out, rolling past places like Smoot, Dawson, Green Meadow, and Sam Black Church. I remember one time stopping by the roadside on a whim, grabbing poles from the truck, and fishing in the midday sun. All because we could. Such freewheeling was the fabric of our trips.

In between it all came the lessons I cherished. "Here they hanged a woman," he said, pointing out the huge oak tree overhead. "'Cause they thought her for a witch." "Don't take that road," I might hear. "It ends against a mountain." Or, "Treat each driver fairly," he would say, then share the one-lane pass. We didn't talk about money, hardships, or the problems of the world. We just ran those country roads.

One thing we could not ignore, however, was my grandfather's encroaching diabetes. As the disease gradually worsened, he lost the use of both legs and became bedfast. Even as a child I could recognize his pain, both in spirit and in health, as his flesh betrayed his soul. I spent many a day beside him trying hard to hold my tears. We would talk about those drives, the sights we had witnessed, the world we'd grown to love. "When I get better," he would say, "we will see them all again."

But fate would not have it. He passed, and the truck sat idle in the drive. I would never see our roadways

quite the same after that, at least not as a child. Just to cross them drew a film reel from my head. Pictures seemed to prove the safer route.

There is one of him on my desk, one taken when my dad was yet a boy. In that picture, a middle-aged version of my grandfather is propped up proud behind the wheel, his foot set rakishly out of the truck. A cigar fills his mouth. Tall mountains flank his shoulder. Dirt roads sprawl dusty at his feet.

I look at this photo often. Almost daily, really. It reminds me life is simple, or, to view it right, as simple as I make it. Sometimes I even hop in with him and we blaze back down those roads, the mountains in the forefront, the world an opened gift. I've lost hours this way, traversing the pathways of our past. They are the places I have roamed, and continue to roam, when the air grows stagnant in my head. The back of Greenbrier County.

I retrace those roads alone now, searching for a ghost, a vision of my teacher. ❖

A native of southern West Virginia, Ben E. Campbell won first place in the 2010 Appalachian Heritage Writers Symposium's contest for his essay "The Golden Shoe." He teaches at Virginia's New River Community College.

The author in his vehicle,"The Wilderbeest." Photo courtesy Ben E. Campbell.

ELEANOR

Denton Loving

Twice, I chased buzzards from her lifeless body, pulled
her up, willed her to live when it would have been easier
to let her die. Her mother, confused by the heat
and the hard birth, had already given up her calf.

Without a bottle, I nursed her with a Ziplock
bag. I made her walk her first steps, her hips locked
between my knees, one front leg picked up and placed
forward. Then the other. Again and again.

I called her Eleanor, for the queen of Aquitaine,
because she needed every ounce of strength a name
could give. She needed the gall to go on crusade, ride
bare-breasted across the desert, make kings of boys.

Denton Loving lives on a farm near the Cumberland Gap. His poetry and prose have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including the forthcoming *From Hill to Holler: Stories of Contemporary Appalachia* (Bottom Dog Press).

CADILLAC HEARSE

Judy Lee Green

In a big black Cadillac hearse we snaked our way across the mountain in a long line of slow-moving cars. The Sunday morning sun hammered down upon us like a carpenter driving nails into a pine coffin.

My Uncle Bo was driving the hearse. My daddy rode beside him. My Aunt Essell and my mama sat behind the men in folding chairs. On the floor with me were my brothers, Gary, Ronnie, and Dana, my sister Donna, and my cousins, Bobbie Dean, Dennie, and Barry.

In a Cadillac hearse my uncle had purchased because no one else had one, we were on our way to a tourist home in the Great Smoky Mountains for a family vacation. It was the summer of 1950. We eight kids and four adults left Chattanooga in the dewy hours of the morning, along with a stack of folding chairs, a pile of quilts and pillows, cardboard suitcases, boxes of food, and jugs of Kool-Aid and water.

Highway 441 from Gatlinburg, Tennessee, to Cherokee, North Carolina, gifted us with the sights and sounds of clamorous waterfalls, talking streams, dawdling brooks, evergreen forests congealed by time, aged limestone rocks and boulders caressed by weather and water, and an occasional deer. Though our parents were excited by the scenery, the only word to rouse our interest was *bear*.

The cry, "There's a bear!" caused every eye to scan the creek bank, the roadside, and the woods. If the crawling traffic stopped, we craned our necks and willed the delay to be a mama bear and two playful cubs.

Aunt Essell had confiscated our Old Maids. Playing cards led to gambling and gambling was a sin. No more Old Maids. Grieving, we kids turned our attention to the folding chairs. We set them up and rode awhile, then folded and stacked them. We made pallets on the floor with the quilts. We snacked. We played word games. As we threaded our way over two-lane blacktop highways to the Great Smoky Mountains, Mama sang to us and told stories from her childhood of ghosts and witches and graveyard haints. We begged for our favorite story, which we called "Little Redheaded Girl."

As Mama began the story we knew by heart, we kids sat cross-legged on the quilts that were spread on the

Gary with Cherokee Indian. Photo courtesy Judy Lee Green.

floor of the hearse. Our nervous fingers picked uncarded cotton from the tiny slits in the rotted red and blue fabrics that always wore out first.

"Many years ago," my Mama said, "a man who worked for the Southern Railroad was transferred from the big city of Atlanta to Varnell, Georgia, little more than a wide place in the road. He, his wife, and his little girl moved into the big painted house the Weedens built before they lost all their money.

"The woman was very unhappy because her husband traveled up and down the railroad and was seldom home. She missed the big city, her family, and friends. She doted on her little girl, though. Her little girl made living in Varnell bearable.

"The little redheaded girl, about four or five years old, was the prettiest little girl that folks had ever seen. Her hair was long and flaming red and naturally curly. She didn't wear flour sack dresses like other little girls. Her mother ordered her clothes from Atlanta, and she looked like a real live doll.

"One day the little girl got sick and her daddy was not at home. There was no doctor in Varnell. The little girl died. They washed her and laid her on a cooling board and put bright shiny nickels on her eyes. Her mother had a white ruffled dress and a white casket with a white satin lining shipped on a train from Atlanta. They buried her near the big oak tree in the Varnell Cemetery. Folks who went to the funeral said she looked like a little movie star, like she could get right out of that casket and start tap dancing. She didn't look dead at all.

"A few weeks passed. The woman decided that she could not possibly stay in Varnell. Her husband agreed that they should go back to Atlanta. On moving day the woman insisted that they dig up the casket, take it with them, and rebury their little daughter when they got back home. Once the casket was raised, the woman demanded that the box be opened to see if it had leaked. No one could stop her.

"The casket was opened. The woman screamed and screamed in horror, bloodcurdling screams. Her hair turned white on the spot. She went out of her mind and spent the rest of her life in an insane asylum.

"Her little daughter had clawed the white satin lining into shreds and tore her beautiful ruffled dress into tatters. She lay with her knees pulled up, her hands in the sides of her flaming red hair, her eyes glared open, and a scream on her mouth. She had been buried alive. And I can show you," my Mama concluded, "just where that little redheaded girl was buried alive and just where her Mama went stark raving mad."

My Aunt Essell clucked disapprovingly and insisted that Mama should not tell us such stories. We begged for more.

"Tell us the story about the little girl milking the hatchet," we cried. "Tell us about the old witch who put a curse on granddaddy's three little pigs."

"When I was a little girl," my Mama began . . . ."

Time passed and we soon arrived at our destination in the blue mist mountains of North Carolina. We had to walk across a swinging bridge over a rushing creek to get to the tourist home where we stayed. Seven years old, I was terrified. The creek looked as big as the Tennessee River to me.

When I stepped on it, the bridge bucked like a wild mustang. It shifted and jerked, leaped and swayed, sometimes trying to sling me off the side, other times trying to hurl me to the end in a fit like a cat coughing up a hairball.

Each time we crossed, my daddy whipped me to make me walk over the bridge and whipped me to make me walk back. We kids had a pillow fight one morning and feathers flew. Before they landed, we were all being whipped that day.

The mountains, the fresh air, the warm days, and the cool nights were the attractions in 1950. There were few restaurants, motels, or souvenir shops. One afternoon we stopped at a small craft shop in a concrete block building that sold toy drums, tomahawks, bows and arrows, Indian headbands, beaded jewelry, and little leather purses that were laced around the edges. My brother Gary had his picture made on the side of the road with a Cherokee Indian in full headdress. Daddy gave the man a dollar for a lifetime of memories.

Most trips in a hearse are one way. We were fortunate. Not only were we nurtured and strengthened as a family by being together in the bosom of the Great Smoky Mountains, but our vacation in Uncle Bo's Cadillac hearse was a two-way trip, one that we still talk about today. ❖

Judy Lee Green of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, is a winner of the James Still Award for Poetry, the Wilma Dykeman Award for essay, the Emma Bell Miles Award for essay, and the Tennessee Mountain Writers Excellence in Writing Award.

MEMORABLE APPALACHIAN JOURNEYS

Dolly Withrow

A journey is like marriage. The certain way to be wrong is to think you control it.
John Steinbeck

Up, up, up, and away we went. Barely wide enough for two cars to pass each other, the road spiraled around the mountain like garland on a Christmas tree. After some persuasion, John, my mother's friend, had agreed to let her drive his black sedan. The fact that she had scant experience behind a wheel did not faze her, for she was young and daring.

Sitting in the back seat behind John, I was thrown first to one side and then the other as we rounded sharp curves. I looked out the right window and saw the cliff dropping straight down into a deep ravine hundreds of feet below. I was a little girl, but I still believe the back end of the car was sometimes suspended far out into space as it hung precariously over the ravine. As young as I was, I knew all that went up had to come down, so I was sure my mother would not be the driver on our return trip. I was wrong.

After visiting a friend in a tuberculosis sanitarium, my mother walked briskly to the car and again slid in behind the steering wheel. Soon, we roared down the helix-like road. Tires screeched, rubber burned, John paled. Somehow, we reached the bottom alive, but the journey became yet another story added to our growing repertoire of family tales and jokes.

With a mean altitude of 1,500 feet, West Virginia has the highest average altitude east of the Mississippi, but on the day we ascended that corkscrew road, we stopped only when we reached an altitude of 2,350 feet, where Pinecrest Sanitarium was located.

A few years later, my Uncle Alfred purchased the first car anyone in our family had ever owned. It was an old Plymouth, made sometime in the '30s. It boasted two doors, wide running boards, and a right front fender that looked as if it had been beaten with a hammer. One afternoon in early fall, my uncle invited me to join him and Aunt Ocie for a leisurely Sunday drive. My aunt rode shotgun, and again I was in the back seat. We chugged along down the dusty road running past our two-story stucco house.

As soon as we had gone through the first traffic light, Aunt Ocie said, "Alfred, you're gonna get us killed. You just ran a green light."

A tall, quiet man with warm brown eyes and dark hair, my uncle said nothing. Traffic in the early '50s was sparse, so he simply made a U-turn, and we were homeward bound. It would be the shortest car trip of my life.

Most of the time, we got around Appalachia on foot. When we had to travel too far to walk, though, we usually rode the city bus. One morning, after a heavy rain had cleansed the earth, I walked down the hill toward the bus stop. I noticed beads of water still clinging to the

Dolly Withrow standing in front of her Uncle Alfred's car. Photo courtesy Dolly Withrow.

foliage bordering the unpaved road. Everything smelled fresh, scrubbed of all impurities. Because dark clouds promised another storm that morning, I carried my umbrella, along with my purse and paper bag containing my office shoes—black high heels, each with closed toe and heel.

Our neighbors' rural mailboxes and ours were lined up at the foot of the hill. Whenever the steep road was muddy, I wore old penny loafers, then changed into my office shoes and left the loafers in the back of our mailbox.

After my workday at a local bank, I attended a law class sponsored by the American Institute of Banking. When I left the class that evening, drivers were already turning on their headlights. Rain had continued throughout the day, so darkness came early. I boarded the red city bus for my thirty-minute trip home. I sat in a front seat and looked at the raindrops clinging to the bus windows. As I was transported to the country, outside I saw only the blackness of night.

When I stepped down from the bus, I had to face oncoming traffic while walking about a block to the foot of the hill where my penny loafers waited in our mailbox. Only two cars passed me that evening, both shining their headlights on me like spotlights. The first car drove past and I turned to watch its red taillights disappear in the distance. The second car passed me and then made a U-turn across the road. Feeling uneasy, I looked to see it coming slowly toward me. I grabbed my loafers, hurriedly put them on, and began running up the hill.

I looked back once and saw that the car was parked at the foot of the hill and its two front doors were open. The lights were still on and the engine was running. I saw two men leave the car and start walking rapidly up the hill. I knew that road well and where all large rocks and potholes were located. Soon I was running so fast that I don't remember my feet touching the ground.

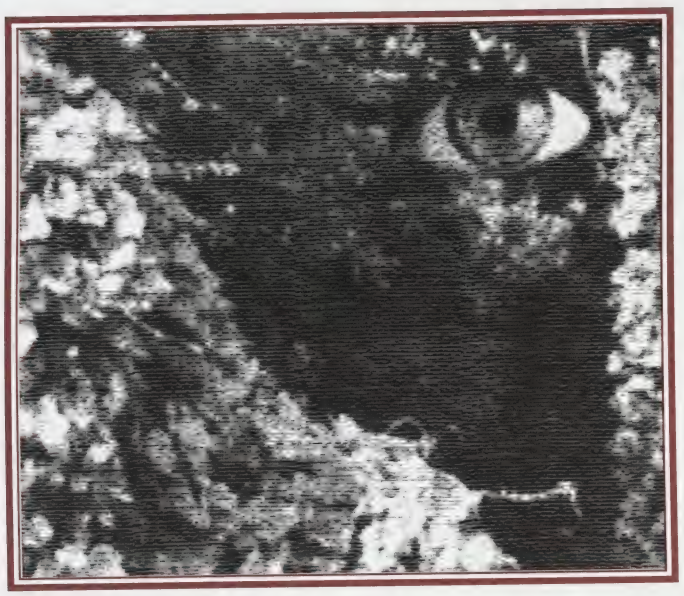
I could hear each heavy footfall behind me, and once one of the men yelled, "Wait a minute." I knew they did not know my name, or they would have called it. Only a young woman then, I was nonetheless gasping for breath by the time I reached the road where our house was located. Just as I started to run past our neighbors' house, I heard Princess, their German shepherd, barking ferociously in their fenced yard. She was descended from a long line of show dogs and had been trained to stay behind the fence. Apparently sensing danger, Princess jumped the tall chain-link fence and stopped in the middle of the road. Standing between my pursuers and me, she growled at the men, who turned and ran back down the hill. Wagging her tail, Princess came to me and stayed with me until I entered the door of my home.

I could not speak. I had heard the expression *scared speechless*, but that was the first time I knew the reality of it. During the following morning, as I sat on our front porch, I could feel the dampness from the recent rain, but I no longer felt it had washed all impurities from the earth. ❖

A retired English professor, Dolly Withrow is the author of four books.

JAMES BOND LOST IN KUDZU

Brian Lee Knopp



My work never ceased to transform me. At the end of a full day's and/or night's work, I often found myself only three feet tall, or a thousand years old, or moving about like a sock puppet that somebody had stuffed with seashells and then stepped on over and over.

Don't get me wrong. As far as P.I.s went, I was obscenely healthy. I did not smoke and only occasionally drank. I was a lean, mean, spying machine. I was easily mistaken for a road biker, a wind surfer, a roofer, a masonry laborer, even as a skinny hippie street kid—and performed passably well in all those roles.

But my workaday worlds coiled about each other, squeezing me between them, squeezing ever more tightly each day. Around 1999, as my business began to increase, the novelty of being a P.I. began to wear off, and the reality of my situation set in: I would have to struggle simultaneously with the worst of two worlds.

First I was toiling away on a frugal, very rugged farm where only accidents and weeds happened quickly; where animals were notorious early risers and where seasonal chores always needed to be completed precisely during the busiest times of the legal calendar and in spite of fickle mountain weather.

Then I was gone, driving the labyrinthine mountain roads, twisting and turning, climbing and falling, hurtling through the splendid seasonal displays of green-tufted velvet, fiery autumnal mosaic, gray tree bones, bluish-white cold. Before my investigative work could even properly begin, there was adversity, there was uncertainty. I had to navigate my way through places like Bugger's Hollow, Bee Log, Doe Bag, Lickskillet, Possumtrot, Upper Pig Pen, Sodom, Hanging Dog Gap, Relief, Loafer's Glory, Lost Cove.

Don't get lost, I told myself. Don't ask for directions. Don't get them curious. Their culture is a car culture. They know everyone by their vehicle, and they never forget a strange one. Drive by once, okay. Drive by twice . . . maybe. Third time, never.

While driving, I'm dodging the usual unannounced boulder, fallen tree, jumpy deer, fleeing bear, scurrying raccoons, milling hunting dogs with tracking aerials waving, dragging their rifle-toting, orange-hatted handlers through the fog. I would eye river

Illustration by Randy Sanders based on a photo by Charlie Warden.

levels and sagging homemade plank bridges. I would sniff the wind for storm fronts. I would be driving at all hours, through every imaginable weather condition, over tooth-rattling hardpan of unpaved back roads, through tire-sucking mud.

I had to squeeze inside my beat-up old Toyota pickup because there was just so much in there, and yet I always feared I had forgotten to bring something essential. With binoculars, topographic maps, real property tax listings, and criminal rap sheets all balanced on my lap, I worked the manual shift while checking the battery or recording levels on my cameras or tape recorders and peeing into an empty plastic Gatorade bottle. I fought off fatigue and focused on my mission. I was deep inside my multitasking reverie, reviewing all of my preparations, choice of tactics, time constraints, investigation expenditure limits, and applicable case law. Yet I was still alert to any signs of relevant information while in pursuit: DANGER – BRIDGE OUT – DETOUR; WATCH OUT – ILL BEES! LOST – HERD OF CATTLE! STOP RIGHT NOW! HAVE YE BEEN DIPPED IN THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB? IF YE BE NOT SAVED, YE WILL DIE!

It was daunting, to say the least, to decompress and shift into the farm-chores-are-awaitin' mode again at 05:30 hours after going to bed only two hours earlier, having just spent the night watching and hearing a hulking bruiser of a father threatening to beat a three-year-old stepchild. I was all but helpless to do anything about it because I was paid to be watching and waiting for his neighbor's marriage to detonate upon the arrival of a certain brunette in a Dodge Neon bearing the bumper sticker "God Allows for U-Turns." ❖

A licensed private investigator, Brian Lee Knopp has provided legal support investigations, both criminal and civil, for over twenty years in North Carolina. He is a former professional sheep shearer with an M.A. degree in English literature from the University of Texas. "James Bond Lost in Kudzu" is an excerpt from his memoir, *Mayhem in Mayberry: Misadventures of a P.I. in Southern Appalachia* (Cosmic Pigbite Press, 2009).

NORRIS LAKE VOCABULARY

Gary Anderson

Language, say the learned among us, is ever changing. Our vocabulary conveys not only information but also culture.

I grew up on Norris Lake and thought I had its language and idioms down-pat. But my biannual trips to the area tell me otherwise. On the way from the airport, well before I leave Interstate 75 in Caryville, Tennessee, kitschy billboards and heaped-up real estate signs along the way tell me I'm entering a foreign-language zone, an East Tennessee Tower of Babel. Gone is the Norris Lake language of my youth, replaced now by a completely unfamiliar vernacular.

As I pass auction signs announcing the approaching Norris Lake basin, I realize that the area possesses perhaps the largest number of "articled" communities in America: The Villages, The Peninsula, The Ridge, The Pointe, and The Willows. My best friend lives in The Willows, not by intention but by accident. Twenty years ago, when he built his own Ponderosa there, we just called it a scorpion-infested hillside. But now he has moved on up, having been incorporated into a place where there isn't a willow in sight. Then there are Deerfield, Harmony Hill, Hidden Springs, Sunset Bay, Emerald Bay, Sunset Cove, Norris Highlands, and Windsor Pointe.

The people who inhabit these places live in "lifestyle communities." In order to qualify for Harmony Hill, The Pointe, or another place that, as one ad boasts, takes up "an entire peninsula," the potential occupant first has to run the Big Brother-like gauntlet of a "property owner's association" and an "architecture control committee." All this left me wondering whether "gated communities" really keep people out—or in. They are Kafkaesque and Orwellian Golden Cages.

One thing stood out right away: Gated people seem to have lots of time and money on their hands. These "luxury lakefront" communities have a litany of amenities: jet-skiing, parasailing, wakeboarding, landing your private plane, tying up your "cigar boat" at the yacht club, or teeing off at the "Par 72 championship golf course."

Of course none of this comes cheap. After all, these sometimes barren knolls are "secluded vacation properties" where condos, chalets, and even villas, with

Photo courtesy Gary Anderson.

names like The Cabins or The House, start at $700 weekly. Or you can opt to purchase two-to-three-bedroom villas starting at $129,000.

News of bargain deals on Norris Lake even reached the *New York Times,* which reported recently that "cottages built in the 1930s and 1940s for the TVA workers . . . now go for between $150,000 and $250,000. The newer and larger lake homes . . . start at $300,000, rising to about $800,000 if they have lake frontage." And given that Norris Lake apparently has expansive "bays" that demand navigational aids, I even found a "lighthouse" for $350,000.

I have kin who were born and raised a short walk from the lake. My father and his siblings slept ten abreast on a straw-covered floor in a perforated wooden "villa." Three miles away, my uncle's farmhouse "condo" stood a mere crow's flight from "Norris Shores." He worked hard in tobacco and snaked logs to pay for his family's subsistence. The doorknobs in his "chalet" were thread spools. Water was won by an in-house hand pump. Air-conditioning was provided by nature, under a maple tree. Heat was generated by a wood- and coal-fed Warm Morning stove. His flat-bottomed aluminium "yacht," only fourteen feet long, was "berthed" most of the year upturned on a stack of tobacco sticks. The deer in his "Deerfield" landed lickety-split on a plate. A "cigar" was not a boat but rather a Swisher Sweet wedged in the corner of his ice-caked beard. "The Ridge" could only mean Pinecrest.

I am in search of an updated dictionary so this native son can finally comprehend the new Babel of Norris Lake. ❖

Gary Anderson is a native of Campbell County, Tennessee, and a monthly columnist for the *LaFollette Press*.

DROUGHT

Silas House

Finally: rain, after three months of dust
coating the curling waxy poplar leaves
and tiger lilies standing muted, so
pale in those miles of Kentucky ditch-lines,
orange reduced to the ghost of orange.

A gray fourth of July and all the lake-
people disheartened, not thinking of the
tobacco farmer or the brown yards or
those like me who adore a gray summer
sky moving in low and full of grief, a

day when the woods are filled with dripping leaves.
Alone, quiet, heads leaned back, eyes closed tight.
Water against skin—that start when the two
forces meet—and then, sudden: the thick green
smell of life coming back. That scent, breathing

like mist on a June morning through the woods.
A straight-down rain, distant thunder grumbling
as it stalks up big-shouldered from the moss
banks of the Rockcastle, stomping like a
determined step-dancer over Slate Ridge,

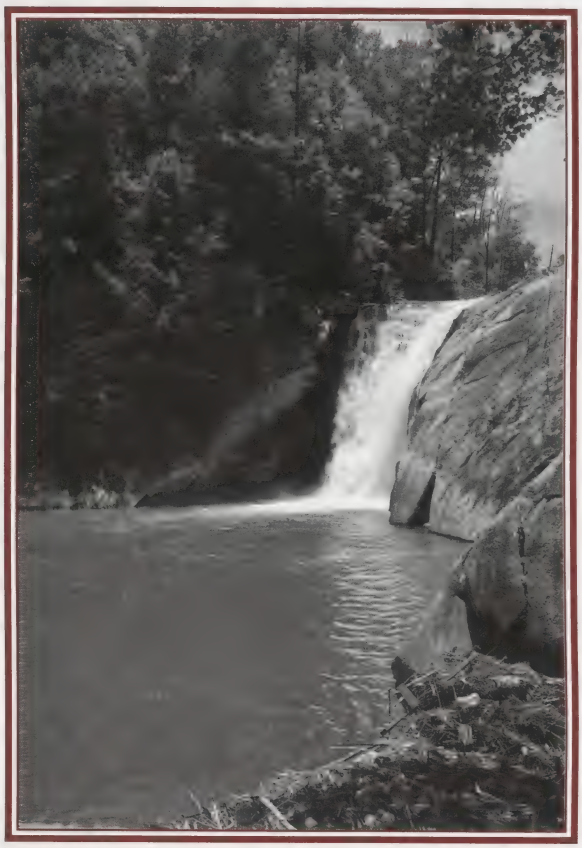
shifting past Morgan's Branch and Pistol Creek,
churning off over Clay County, giving,
offering those little dry creeks a sup.
Deer and foxes might stir amongst the beech
groves, bend to have a drink. They too know what

it is to be lonesome. But it's only
the ground that has received water. I am
hopeless, in need of a good rain. Before
long I will be nothing more than the ghost
of a man, a Redbird River of rocks.

Silas House is National Endowment for the Humanities Chair of Appalachian Studies at Berea College in Kentucky. He is an award-winning novelist, playwright, journalist, and activist.

WHO KEEPS OUR RIVERS FLOWING?

Michael Joslin



The Problem

When the Banner family settled in the mountain wilderness along the Elk River in the nineteenth century, they found an enduring home on a bold, deep, and swift river that provided potable water, abundant trout, and scenic beauty. Below the falls the flow could carry them and their goods into Tennessee swiftly and surely. Their settlement, the Banners on the Elk, gave a lasting name to the community. Today they would little recognize the tourist Mecca that has replaced their rugged farmland; they also would little recognize the bold stream that watered their land.

The river is much diminished from its former pristine state. Development has freed tons of dirt to wash into the Elk, choking its flow and changing the rich habitat tremendously. Instead of a rocky bottom glimmering through crystalline waters, today greasy mud coats the bed and rocks and turns banks into sucking traps for unwary folks. However there remain those who appreciate the river as much as those who experienced its virginal state and dedicate themselves to its renewal.

As Lees-McRae biology professor Stewart Skeate participated in the Big Sweep River Cleanup on a bright September weekend, he sank to mid thigh working his way along the Elk's bank next to Highway 194 between Banner Elk and Elk Park, North Carolina. With his bag of trash in one hand, he pried himself out with his walking staff.

"It was disgusting," he said, wet nearly to the waist. "I had to get out and wash myself off in the river."

Standing on a rock above the shallow flow, he stirred the sediment with his stick. Summer drought had

Elk Falls' beauty marred by refuse in basin. Photo by Michael Joslin.

drawn the water down even more than usual, and many of the large boulders covered with a layer of dry mud protruded from the river.

"There's dirt eroding from the highway that washes right down into the river," said Skeate, shaking his head as he pointed to the quicksand-like slough under a nearly vertical 30-foot drop from the road. "They're supposed to stabilize banks like that. Any heavy rain or high water will just bring the soil right down."

A hundred yards away on the high bank by the roadside lie two large piles of loose, dry dirt. No silt fences, wall, or other barrier lies between the soil and the river. Fortunately some natural vegetation and a slope

gentler than the nearly vertical wall a short distance away provide some hope that the tons of dirt won't end up in the water, adding to the layers of silt that have turned the Elk into a sluggish wash of sedimentation that anyone can cross dry shod in many places.

Another Lees-McRae professor, Chris Carr, remembers when the river ran free, and crossing it was a challenge.

"I started fishing the Elk in 1969 when I was six or seven years old. I was told I could only go up or down one side; an average size man could only cross the river in a couple of spots, and that was going through water. It was fast with deep pools," said Carr, who spent much of his youth in his family's house just 50 feet from the swift waters of the river.

"You had the potential to catch a really nice-sized fish in a rock pool. The water looked black when you looked down because it was clear to the rock bottom," he adds.

Another 1960s-era fisherman, Richard Jackson, who lived about a mile uphill from the river, remembered the fishing well.

"Hell yeah it was better then. I've caught trout down there until my arms were so tired I had to quit. There weren't many places then that you could cross it. The last time I fished it, I caught a brown trout about a foot long, as thin as a pencil with a big head. It was starving because the river was so silted up," said Jackson, shaking his head with disgust.

The sedimentation has smothered much of the river's aquatic life, according to Skeate. Since 1985 he has taken his biology classes to the river for field labs.

"I used to be able to pull out eight species of fish. Now I'm lucky to find two or three. I used to be able to flip these rocks and find several kinds of invertebrates; the rocks were alive with them. No longer, because of the sediment. Basically all of the river's aquatic life has declined," he says, pointing up and down the river as his son Kelby rummages through the underbrush and fills another large trash bag with refuse.

Chris Carr dates the beginning of the river's problems to the start of large scale development.

"It really started going downhill when they developed Beech Mountain. The next nail in the coffin was when they started the Elk River development," said Carr, who grew up in a house on the banks of the river a couple of miles outside Banner Elk. "Extensive development occurred through the late '70s, '80s, and '90s, right up to now."

From the feeders, Shawneehaw Creek and Elk Creek, down along the river for miles, new development has only increased in the past decade. Wendy Patoprsty, an extension agent with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, has monitored the creeks and river for sedimentation. From her work, she, too, believes that siltation is a major issue for the watershed.

"While we still have wild trout swimming around on Shawneehaw, I've seen the creek silt-in tremendously. A lot of the deeper pools that used to be there are filled in," said Patoprsty.

Near the headwaters of the Elk, about two miles upstream from where Skeate sank into the mud, Andrew

Stewart Skeate gauges sediment as he stands on mud-covered rock. Photo by Michael Joslin.

Lowd and Jesse Hoots scoured the river for trash as they contributed their efforts to the Big Sweep. Lowd, a whitewater rafting aficionado, was discouraged by the condition of the river.

"There's not enough water now," he said, standing on a boulder high above the flowing water. "It's frustrating me because there is no water running. Downstream is a real famous creek run, Roadside Elk. A lot of people talk about it. But there's not enough flow to even try it now."

As he and his buddy filled their bags with beer cans, drink jugs, and other trash from a riverside campsite, Lowd lamented the low water and the environmental degradation in the area and wished that cleaning the river itself could be as easy as gathering the garbage along the banks and among the rocks.

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to repair nearly a half-century of neglect of the Elk River.

"There are regulations, but the enforcement is not there," said Skeate as he worked his way along the river's edge. "Ten years ago development was bad, but it's increasing every year, and the level of sedimentation is also increasing. More riverside development, more bridges, more disturbance of upstream wetlands—there's no end in sight."

The hardy pioneers who found a home on the Elk many years ago would not recognize their boisterous, bountiful river, a once vibrant natural resource filled with fish that is now a sluggish conduit for irreplaceable mountain soil.

Getting Around the Problem

"Every child in the mountains has the right to go down to the Watauga and Elk rivers and catch a trout and bring it home to eat with his family and not worry about poisoning them," said Robert Kennedy Jr., scion of the famous political family and a dedicated environmentalist.

He spoke to a group of environmentally concerned citizens in Blowing Rock, North Carolina, in 2007 as he rallied support for funding to bring a riverkeeper to the troubled Watauga and Elk rivers. His conservation organization, the Waterkeeper Alliance, had approved an application for such a position, and all that was needed was the money to put it into place. Submitting the application and spearheading the drive to fund the position was Appalachian Voices, an environmental organization that "brings people together to solve the environmental problems having the greatest impact on the central and southern Appalachian Mountains. Our

mission is to empower people to defend our region's rich natural and cultural heritage by providing them with tools and strategies for successful grassroots campaigns," according to the mission statement at http://appvoices.org/about/.

Appalachian Voices brought Kennedy to the mountains not only because he is a strong advocate for the environment in general, but more particularly, he is the founder of the Waterkeeper Alliance. According to its web site, the alliance is:

> a global movement of on-the-water advocates who patrol and protect over 100,000 miles of rivers, streams and coastlines in North and South America, Europe, Australia, Asia and Africa. Waterkeepers combine firsthand knowledge of their waterways with an unwavering commitment to the rights of their communities and to the rule of law. Whether they are on the water tracking down polluters, in a courtroom advocating for stronger enforcement of environmental laws, at a town meeting rallying community support, or in a classroom educating young people, Waterkeepers defend their communities against anyone who threatens their right to clean water—from law-breaking polluters to unresponsive government agencies.

Robert Kennedy Jr. at fundraiser for Riverkeeper shows his skill in falconry. Photo by Michael Joslin.

Inspired by Kennedy's hoarse-voiced oratory and stories of riverkeepers who succeeded in rescuing troubled waters, many rallied to support Appalachian Voices, and the campaign reached its goal. Today the Upper Watauga Riverkeeper, Donna Lisenby, works under the aegis of Appalachian Voices, serving as the "primary watchdog and spokesperson for the Elk and Watauga Rivers which run from their headwaters on Grandfather Mountain and the Blue Ridge Parkway in western North Carolina to the dam at the foot of Watauga Lake in east Tennessee. [Her] mission is to protect and restore the communities, water quality, and ecological health of the watershed," according to the site http://riverkeeper.appvoices.org/.

Lisenby frequently launches herself on the rivers' waters and deals with environmental disasters, such as two fish kills that occurred in one week in July 2010. Often, such kills, while bemoaned by environmentalists, were never officially assessed or addressed. Now, however, Lisenby's relentless badgering of responsible private parties and of governmental officials in charge of enforcing water regulations, her careful documentation of the causes of the kills and the damage to the environment, and her skillful use of public media have created strong public awareness and brought legal redress while limiting the damage to fragile water resources.

Lisenby's approach begins with friendly persuasion and logic but ends in heavy legal hammering. First she starts with the polluter, explaining the problems, presenting solutions, and exhorting the polluter to follow her advice. If that strategy does not work, she goes to the next level, filing suit under the Clean Water Act, beginning at the state level, then going to Federal District Court, then on to the Supreme Court, if necessary.

While direct intervention in disasters and aggressive legal actions are the high adrenaline parts of the Riverkeeper's work, another aspect is perhaps even more important. Donna Lisenby has become the voice of the two rivers, telling their story to the media, to interested groups and private individuals. In the summer of 2010, she spoke at Lees-McRae as part of the John Stephenson Center for Appalachia Lecture Series. Her talk occurred a few hours after the Hardin Creek kerosene spill and the same week as the Hodges Creek coal-tar asphalt sealant fish kill. Not only did she arouse public indignation, she also educated the audience, turning them into deputy riverkeepers. She encouraged everyone in attendance to become monitors of the branches, creeks, streams, and rivers that flow by their homes.

The swift-flowing rivers that tie mountain communities together are the life-blood of Appalachia. Just as cholesterol and saturated fat can clog the arteries of individuals, so the pollutants, silt, and refuse of development, industry, and careless farmers can destroy the circulatory systems of our land. Monitoring the health of our watershed is everyone's responsibility, and with the leadership of the Upper Watauga Riverkeeper, abusers can be brought to account.

As Harvard Ayers, co-founder of Appalachian Voices, said when campaigning to bring in the riverkeeper: "We need people who care about the rivers, from trout fishermen to people who go out on the lake boating. We are going to involve a lot of people. I challenge everybody to become the eyes and ears of the rivers." ❖

Michael Joslin lives with his wife Pam on a farm in the Buladean community of Mitchell County, North Carolina. He is a professor at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina.

MONTCOAL

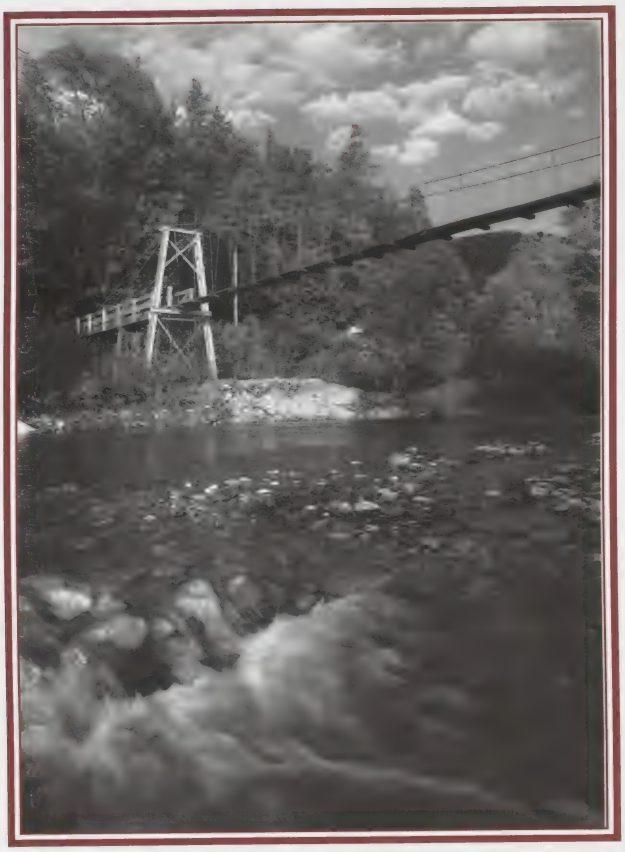
Victor M. Depta

such an old grief
coming to us in the evening news
as if, across a gulf, an emptiness
in a place called West Virginia
was death again
where no roots are so deep
or mechanical or liable to maiming
as men are
delicately limbed—
that old grief again
predictable almost in the newscasts
as a comfort of repetition
as ballads are
wherein women weep and wipe their tears
men mumble the inexpressible
and choke and look away
and everyone
old-fashioned as a quatrain
prays
in that old refrain
for men who grime themselves
underground
for a wife or a child
exposed there
in the stony chambers
to the explosion
bruised and burnt beyond breath
in the sudden yellow and orange blast
in Appalachia, in that age-old song
as if it were a ballad
about death

Victor M. Depta is co-editor at Blair Mountain Press, which published *Coal: A Poetry Anthology,* edited by Chris Green, in 2006. Depta is the author of ten books of poetry, two volumes of comedic plays, one book of essays, and four novels.

LOST CROSSINGS

Katey Schultz



The idea came slowly at first, like snowmelt filtering down a mountainstream. I'd been told the swinging footbridges are maintained by North Carolina's Department of Transportation. I also learned that Mitchell and Yancey counties are home to thirteen of the state's twenty-three remaining footbridges. Nowadays, many of them lead to a dead end: private property, a cemetery, or an old train depot.

I made a pilgrimage to the oldest footbridge in the state, the Honeycutt Bridge, built in 1947. I wanted to get a feel for what these relics of Appalachia were all about. Anchored between Highway 226 and a steep hillside, the space begged for interpretation. I could almost hear the stories being told—memories from a way of life nearly forgotten. Peering over the edge of the footbridge, I watched Bad Creek braid into Rock Creek, and this notion of a book, *Lost Crossings*, came to fruition. Over the next year, photographer Shane Darwent and I would research, map, and cross all thirteen of Western North Carolina's most historic swinging footbridges.

In the 1930s and '40s, many families, often without vehicles, lived along the major waterways of the North Toe, South Toe, and Cane rivers in communities such as Honeycutt, Toecane, Lunday, and Higgins. Communities like these were rich in culture and beauty, but getting from one place to the next could be challenging.

"Around this time, someone within the State Highway Commission made a decision," says Don Idol, resident historian at the DOT offices in Raleigh. "It was decided to allow homeowners on the other side of these rivers access to the state highway via

Bridge with rushing water. Photo by Shane Darwent.

swinging footbridges." From there, people could carpool into town or remain on foot but shave miles off their journey.

George Canipe worked as a bridge foreman for the state around this time. He was employed for nearly forty years and oversaw the construction of all thirteen footbridges in Mitchell and Yancey counties. He died in 1993 and is survived by his wife Corrine and his son James.

"As a youngster, I remember my father's smell the most when he came home from work. It was creosote, paint, and gasoline," says James. "He was always really tired when he came home. The swinging bridges were very important at that time. It was the only way across unless the river froze up."

Many county residents still recall life in those small riverside communities. Bud Phillips, longtime Mitchell County businessman, grew up in Avery County near one of the swinging bridges.

"Those bridges were built for lovin'," he laughs. "I crossed more than one of them on my motorcycle a time or two. Families went back and forth to the highway to catch a ride. That was the only way we had to get to 19E. We'd have forded the river with mules if that bridge hadn't been there."

For others, the swinging footbridges are emblems of our history.

"Those bridges weave together so many perspectives," says Dr. Daniel Barron, director of the Avery-Mitchell-Yancey County Regional Library System and member of the Bakersville Historical Society. "Any time that you lose an actual thing from the past, then the past becomes abstract. The swinging bridges are a concrete thing that you can touch and by touching that, you're actually touching the past and feeling something that was there."

As for the thirteen bridges in Mitchell and Yancey counties, their fate will be determined by the test of time. All footbridges are open to the public. They are maintained by the state because they are considered pedestrian walkways and are designed to function as conveniently and safely as sidewalks—sidewalks that just happen to be swinging on a steel suspension system high above rushing water. The process for removing footbridges requires local action and local monies, and the price tag is quite high. But the funding for maintaining footbridges comes from the state. This is because all public walkways

or roadways that are also bridges must meet state-mandated, federally-regulated standards for safety.

It is this loophole—or blessing, depending on how you look at it—that keeps state-funded DOT crews checking the footbridges annually. If one should ever fall down or be struck by a tree, for instance, it's likely to vanish from history. The only thing that can mandate the re-construction of a fallen footbridge is the presence of a school-aged child who needs to use a footbridge to catch a school bus on the other side of the river. Bridge 297W over the Cane River in Yancey County is just such a bridge, providing the only highway access for residents during times of high water when their driveways are hidden under the river.

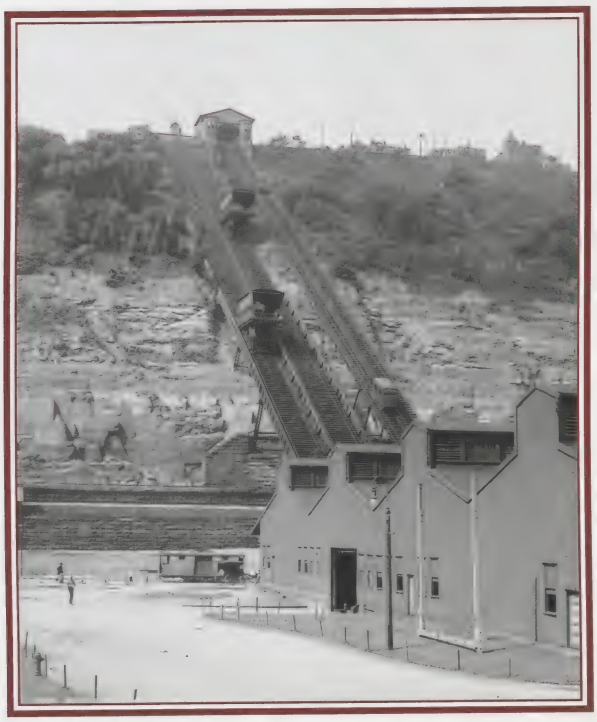
Whether crossing footbridges out of necessity or nostalgia, it is always the sound first: a hollow step followed by the slightest ringing of the guard wire as the movement reverberates down the sides of the bridge. Then it is the sensation: small ridges of chipped paint brushing beneath your fingertips, the occasional tilted nail head raised just above the others. Finally, there is the rhythm: step, bounce, step, bounce, and by then the whole footbridge sings its metal chorus, the ancient wooden planks clapping a percussive beat. ❖

Katey Schultz is most recently from Bakersville, North Carolina. She will spend 2010-2012 attending writing residencies across the United States.

Bridge with missing planks. Photo by Shane Darwent.

UP AND OVER

Margaret M. Nava



In the years following the American Revolution, the U.S. Constitution was written and ratified, George Washington became the first President of the United States, and Horace Greeley advised young men to "Go West … and grow up with the country." For some who followed Greeley's advice, that meant jumping on a horse, heading toward the sunset, and spending months, if not years, traveling through uncharted territory. For others, particularly those with families, it meant living in covered wagons, enduring inclement weather, and risking attack by hostile Indians. For many, it meant finding a way up, over, or around the Appalachian Mountains, with their steep summits, sloping ridges, and dense forests.

In 1790, Timothy Matlack, Samuel Maclay, and John Adlum were commissioned to survey the headwaters of the Susquehanna River and explore for a passageway that would connect it to the West Branch of the Allegheny River. In 1807, Robert Fulton and Robert Livingston launched a steamboat on the Hudson River and traveled 150 miles from New York to Albany in thirty-two hours. And in 1825, the Erie Canal was opened, linking New York City to the Great Lakes and, ultimately, the West. With increased river travel came the obvious need for boats.

Situated at the confluence of the Monongahela, Allegheny, and Ohio rivers, and sitting in the middle of one of the most productive coalfields in the country, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was the ideal location for boatyards. In 1792, the sloop Western Experiment was built in a Pittsburgh boatyard, and by the mid-1800s, ocean-going vessels that carried goods as far as Europe were setting sail from there.

Soon other industries sprang up as Pittsburgh began producing large quantities of iron, brass, tin, and glass products. By the 1840s, it had grown into a major industrial area attracting immigrants from Europe

The Monongahela Incline. Photo by Detroit Publishing Company, courtesy the Library of Congress.

in search of employment, better living conditions, and the American dream. Since almost all the shipyards and factories were built on the river flats, most workers preferred to live in neighborhoods away from the

industrial center's crowded streets, soot-filled skies, and frequent floods. Unfortunately, most of those neighborhoods were on bluffs high above the city. Railroad trunk lines constructed in the 1830s carried goods in and out of the industrial area, but workers still had to find their own way up, or over, the bluffs to get to their homes. There were footpaths, but walking was tiresome and took too long. The solution was the funicular.

"When a friend at West Virginia Public Broadcasting advised me to ride the inclines in Pittsburgh, I at first envisioned something constructed solely for tourists, and certainly the view of Pittsburgh that the inclines afford is stunning," says Fred Sauceman, *Now & Then* editor. "But in riding them, I learned that they are much more than amusements for tourists. They were created in the late nineteenth century for very practical reasons—to transport working people to and from their jobs and homes."

According to definition, funiculars, also called inclined or plane railways, consist of cables attached to a pair of counterbalanced, tram-like vehicles that move on rails up and down steep slopes. The word *funicular* derives from the Latin *funiculus*, a diminutive of *funis*, meaning "rope." While a total of seventeen inclines operated in Pittsburgh between 1870 and 1901, today only two remain—the Monongahela and the Duquesne. Most were put out of business by the coming of the electric streetcar in the 1890s.

Opened in 1870, the Monongahela (or the Mon, as locals call it) was steam-powered and moved two cars along wooden tracks rising 367 feet at a 35-degree angle. The 635-foot-long wooden tracks were replaced with iron in 1882, and the original steam power was replaced with electricity in 1938. Aside from being shut down in 1982 for a complete renovation and in 1994 for motor and braking system replacements, the Mon is the oldest continuously operating funicular in the United States. Located near the Smithfield Bridge in the heart of the Station Square shopping and historic area, it is a popular tourist attraction and was declared an historic structure by the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation and later registered as a National Historic Landmark.

Both a form of transportation and a working museum, the Duquesne Incline has been ranked by *USA Weekend* magazine as the second most beautiful view in America and by Microsoft Network as the third most romantic spot in America. Scaling Mount Washington, this incline, originally built to carry cargo, was closed down in 1962 due to a lack of patrons as well as capital for needed repairs. Not wishing to lose a landmark, a group of concerned citizens formed the Society for the Preservation of the Duquesne Heights Incline in 1963 and raised enough funds to save their treasured "Duke," which is 793 feet long, 400 feet high, and inclined at a 30-degree angle.

Over the years, the cable cars, built by the J.G. Brill Company of Philadelphia, were stripped of paint to reveal the original cherry panels and maple trimmings, and the brass fittings and amber glass windows were restored but not replaced. An observation deck at the summit station offers breathtaking views, particularly at night, of Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle and the surrounding countryside, and a nearby equipment viewing platform allows visitors to see the motor, driving gear, and giant cast-iron drum that pulls the two thick steel-wire cables that move the incline's cars. The polished brass bell located in the upper station adds to the nostalgic atmosphere.

The reasons for riding Pittsburgh's inclines are many. Locals use them to get back and forth to their jobs, to go shopping, or to frequent the eclectic assortment of restaurants at both ends. Tourists use them to view the city and take pictures. History buffs ride them to learn something about Pittsburgh's fascinating past and experience a bit of what life must have been like before automobiles and cell phones took over. On any given day, you might see blue collars, silk suits, plaid shorts, and baby strollers, all headed up and over. ❖

Margaret M. Nava has written five books: two New Mexico travel guides and three "Lady-Lit" novels about life and love in the twilight years.

The Mon in Pittsburgh. Photo by Fred Sauceman.

A HUNDRED MILES ON A CLEAR DAY

Lydia F. Knight

The history of the Lookout Mountain Incline has its roots in the Cherokee removal, the Civil War, court battles, greed, labor strikes, romanticism, tourism, and engineering.

The story begins in the heartbreak of the Trail of Tears. After the Cherokee Nation was removed to Oklahoma, Colonel James Whiteside bought up property on Lookout Mountain in southeast Tennessee. Land was cheap because it was not easily accessible. He completed the Whiteside Turnpike in 1852, the only road to the top of the mountain. It probably traced a path used by the Cherokee for hundreds of years. The Whiteside family charged a toll of two dollars per person on the turnpike, during a time when a good meal cost twenty-five to fifty cents and working men were paid one or two dollars per day. Adding insult to injury, it took four hours to travel the rough, steep turnpike from the base of the mountain to the top. Chattanoogans and tourists from as far away as the Atlantic coast, New Orleans, and Memphis came to escape the summer heat and enjoy the cool and healthy mountain air. Investors and speculators sought to develop the mountain area as a summer resort. The Whitesides completed the first hotel on the mountain, the Lookout Mountain Hotel in Summertown. It was occupied by both Federal and Confederate military and was burned down during the war.

The tragedy of the Civil War battles in Chattanooga and on Lookout Mountain later gave way to veterans returning with family and friends to view the former battlegrounds. The bloody Battle of Lookout Mountain was romantically renamed "The Battle Above the Clouds," and there was a brisk tourist trade to view the Point where General Joe Hooker placed his flag. Point Park is now part of the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park.

After the Civil War travelers had a more urgent reason to reach the mountaintop. During the yellow fever epidemic in 1878, desperate people sought refuge in the healthier mountain air. The high toll and the steep ascent made a perilous time even more difficult and may have influenced the building of an alternative road. In 1879 the Johnson Turnpike (now Ochs Highway) was completed. The gentler grade and lower toll made living on the mountaintop even more attractive. Many Chattanooga residents were interested in building summer homes on Lookout for both cooler weather and health reasons. The mountain is not only noticeably cooler than the valley, but

Lookout Mountain Incline. Photo by William Henry Jackson, courtesy the Library of Congress.

it offers a panoramic view of seven states. Newspapers of the day rhapsodized about the "primitive grandeur" and the "ozone of the cloud-plane."

Even though tourists could now take the Johnson Turnpike to the mountaintop, they still had to cross

Whiteside property to access the Point. To recoup the loss of tolls on the Whiteside Turnpike, Harriet Whiteside, the widow of Colonel Whiteside, charged twenty-five cents to visit the Point. Only tourists who used the Owens Livery Company were allowed to visit the Point; all others were barred by security guards.

Railroad engineers eventually developed a funicular railway system consisting of two cars that counterbalanced one another and linked by a cable and driving wheel at the top. As one car descended, the other ascended. Major W.R. King engineered the first incline on Lookout Mountain. It was officially opened on March 9, 1887, and provided direct access to the Point Hotel from St. Elmo, the neighborhood at the foot of the mountain. The Chattanooga and Lookout Mountain Railway stretched 4,000 feet up the mountain with a 33 percent grade and included two major curves. It also connected to the two-mile Narrow Gauge Railroad which ran from the Point Hotel to the tourist sites of Sunset Rock and the Natural Bridge. Passengers included hotel guests, Chattanooga residents, and day-trippers. The open-air, trolley-style cars provided relief from the summer heat. Fare was fifty cents for adults and twenty-five for children for the five-minute trip. The Point Hotel offered first class accommodations for $2.50 to $4 per night.

All too soon there were competitors. The Broad Gauge Railroad was completed on May 27, 1888, and was boarded in downtown Chattanooga. The Chattanooga and Lookout Mountain Railway Company reasoned that this would provide an edge over the competition. The official opening of the Broad Gauge Railroad, a train of five passenger cars, coincided with a land sale on the mountaintop (arranged by the company), and there were 6,000 passengers the first day. At least 2,000 more rode the incline because there was not enough room on the Broad Gauge train.

The rival line also built a rival hotel, the Lookout Inn, completed in 1890 with 400 rooms. The dining room could hold several hundred people, and the hotel also boasted a bowling alley and a billiard room. Both lines were dependent on the hotel trade, but the hotels suffered from competition with each other. By 1895 neither the lines nor the hotels were doing well. There was not enough demand for both an incline and a railroad. Nor was there enough tourist trade for both hotels. After a second incline was completed, the other two lines quickly succumbed to economic realities. The Broad Gauge Railroad closed in 1898, and the first incline was dismantled in 1900 after plans to convert it to a freight line never materialized.

In 1895 the second and present-day incline was built by the engineer John T. Crass and the Lookout Mountain Incline Railway Company. The new incline served both residents and tourists, which helped it survive the loss of the Lookout Inn to fire in 1908 and the dismantling of Point Hotel in 1913. The incline is still the steepest in the world with a 72.7 percent grade and a mile-long track.

Today the incline is operated by the Chattanooga Area Regional Transportation Authority and carries more than 100,000 passengers each year. The track is advertised as "America's Most Amazing Mile." From the top, it's claimed, one can see the Smoky Mountains a hundred miles away on a clear day. The incline was designated as a National Historic Site in 1973, and it is also a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark.

In Chattanooga's Hunter Art Museum visitors often view the 1878 painting "Chattanooga from Lookout Mountain" by James Hope and then ride the incline to the mountaintop and marvel at the difference in that same view over 130 years later. ❖

Lydia F. Knight is director of the Derrell C. Roberts Library at Dalton State College in Dalton, Georgia.

Photo courtesy Chattanooga Area Regional Transportation Authority.

NAVITAT

Sarah Thomas

The forest near Barnardsville, North Carolina, echoes with screams, hollers, and Tarzan yells eight months out of the year. And mostly they're yells of delight as visitors hurtle through the trees on ziplines that range from slightly nerve-wracking to downright adrenaline-pumping.

Navitat officially opened May 15, 2010, offering a three-hour canopy tour with ten ziplines, several rapells, and a couple of rope bridges. Guests begin their adventure at the welcome center—a modern-looking building nestled in what was once a small pasture off Poverty Branch Road in Barnardsville. They meet their guides, go through a 20-minute orientation session, and gear up—this involves donning about seven pounds of gear that fits like a jumpsuit, along with a helmet and leather gloves.

Navitat provides guests with a ride up the steep mountain in rough-terrain vehicles—an adventure itself—to the start of the custom-designed course. At the top, guests are trained in proper zipline techniques before taking that first leap. The training isn't tricky: Hold onto your trolley above your head with your left hand, place your right hand over your left, and if you need to brake, move the left hand down onto the line behind the trolley to slow your forward momentum. There are also directions for what to do if you spin or stop short of the next platform.

Two highly-skilled canopy guides lead each group of no more than eight—there's always a guide ahead of you and one behind. Guides handle all equipment, and guests are attached to a redundant safety system at all times when off the ground. While the activity is undeniably thrilling, it's also incredibly safe.

But knowing the canopy tour is safe doesn't keep some guests from experiencing a few nerves on the way up the mountain. A group of seven friends from the Cashiers, North Carolina, area came out to do a little bonding in the trees. They've been friends for more than seven years and call themselves the "Mountain Chix." They started out enjoying the occasional lunch together and somehow found themselves at Navitat ready to gear up and go flying.

Lynn Leach is an old hand, having done ziplines in various locations three times previously, but most of the ladies called themselves newbies. When asked who was most scared, Patty Jane Hicks' hand shot into the air. At sixty-four, she somehow let her friends talk her into a canopy tour.

An adventurer rushes down one of the ten ziplines at Navitat Canopy Adventures. Photo courtesy Navitat Canopy Adventures.

"At my age I may never get the opportunity again," she said. Her goal for the day was simply "Getting back alive and doing this together."

The course was designed by John Walker, president of Bonsai Design, a company that has installed canopy tours, ziplines, and challenge courses all across the United States from Alaska to Texas to New Hampshire. He came to the Asheville area at the behest of family who live nearby. He looked at around 300 properties before deciding that Moody Cove offered everything he

was looking for. Navitat is leasing the 240-acre site for twenty-five years, and the course is designed so that if the company moved out today, hardly a trace would be left behind.

General manager Dylan Burt explained that the destination is designed to have minimal impact on the flora and fauna while bringing participants into the woods where they can gain a greater appreciation for nature.

"We're interested in teaching people something," said Burt. "We want the tour to change people's lives. Once people are out of their comfort zone, you can really leave them with something."

The thirty or so guides at Navitat are not only trained in using the ziplines, first aid, and safety and rescue, they are also knowledgeable about the forest around them. Whether guests are simply interested in identifying the tree they're standing in or learning about the geology of the area, guides are happy to share that knowledge.

But marketing manager Abby Burt pointed out that the "default" at Navitat is always fun. She describes the course as "active but not strenuous" and recommends it for adventurers of all ages. The oldest zipper was the eighty-seven-year-old grandfather of a staff member. And while zipping through the trees a couple of stories up in the air has the potential to send pulse rates soaring, Burt added that "It's not designed to be terrifying."

Patty Jane would agree. After completing the course, she rappelled to the ground and sat on a bench to remove her gloves and loosen her helmet. "I'm proud of myself," she said with a huge smile. "I want to do it again before I'm seventy." Patty Jane offered high praise for the guides. "The guides are so knowledgeable, they impart confidence to you," she said.

Lynn Leach added that although she'd done the course before, it was still exciting and challenging. When asked what advice she'd give to a first-timer, she said, "Listen to your guide, follow directions, and sit back and have fun."

Not only are guests having fun, but so are the guides. While many of them have backgrounds in some sort of outdoor adventure work, most are newcomers to canopy tours simply because ziplining is relatively new to the tourism industry.

Russ Swinney has been leading tours since June 2010. He came to Navitat as a certified mechanic and driver and worked his way up to guiding. He said in his previous job he was covered in grease and oil all day, but now he works on the rough-terrain vehicles when they need it, drives guests, and guides tours.

"I like coming to work and being this relaxed," said Russ, a native of Arizona. "I get to take people on tours through the treetops. I love it here."

And the guests clearly love it, too. In the first six months of operation, Navitat staff members have been surprised by two things—the number of return guests they see and the number of international visitors. A group heading out not long after the Mountain Chix included a local repeat rider who had brought two friends from Italy. The group also included two brothers from Ireland—one of whom now lives in Asheville—who spent their last day of a weeklong visit zipping through the trees. Other guests have come from Scotland, Germany, and even Hong Kong. For the repeat visitors, Navitat is working on some sort of frequent flier card that will offer discounts.

Navitat is open April through November. A typical canopy tour, from gear-up to the short hike back to the welcome center, lasts 3.5 hours. Basic requirements include weighing between 90 and 250 pounds and being in reasonably good health. The cost of the tour is $85 for adults and $75 for youth. ❖

A native of French Creek, West Virginia, Sarah Thomas now lives in Asheville, North Carolina. She is the director of development and public relations for Presbyterian Home for Children in Black Mountain.

An adventurer rushes down one of the ten ziplines at Navitat Canopy Adventures. Photo courtesy Navitat Canopy Adventures.

ALLEGIANCE

Randy Sanders

If ever a word sliced both ways, *outsourcing* fits the bill. From the boardrooms of transnational corporations to single moms putting their children to bed, *outsourcing* cuts into the very fabric of societies around the world—for good and ill.

Outsourcing is the use of outside resources to perform activities usually handled by an internal workforce. Hugh Wallace and Mike Hensley, the owners of Allegiance Footwear in Mountain City, Tennessee, know a lot about outsourcing. Their perspective on the subject is summed up in a three-line sign on the plant's front door: "NOT MADE IN CHINA—Not now, not ever,—NEVER!"

Mountain City is located in the extreme northeastern corner of the state. Its population figure nearly matches its elevation at 2,350 feet above sea level, the highest of any city in Tennessee. Hugh and Mike's joint venture is certainly a sourcing story, but it is also a story firmly, and finally, planted in "place."

The April 26, 1995, headline in *The Tomahawk*, Mountain City's weekly newspaper, disheartened many: "Timberland Plant Closing in June." An unnamed Timberland employee, nearing retirement, was quoted in the article: "This hurts. It really hurts. It's not bad for me but I'm worried about the young people. They've got car payments, house payments. They are just getting started."

Ed Feeley, senior vice president and general manager for Timberland's footwear division, was quoted in the article, too: "Contract manufacturing or outsourcing has been a growing trend in our industry for the past twenty years and we believe it can provide us with cost efficiencies."

Hugh Wallace and Mike Hensley had seen similar economic dramas played out before. In a sense, their careers had been like watching an approaching fire—smell the smoke, feel the heat, and *voilà*, outsourced. They had had enough.

At nineteen, Hugh Wallace left his family's Virginia farm to work at Craddock-Terry Shoe Corporation as a janitor. A congenial, smart-as-a-whip guy, he quickly rose through the ranks. He would go on to apply those same "smarts" at Thom-McAn, Timberland, and Walk-Over Shoes. In addition to that initial job as a janitor, Wallace has worked as a mechanic, supervisor, plant manager, director of manufacturing,

Sign on front door of Allegiance Footwear. Photo by Randy Sanders.

and consultant. He has seen much of the world and many parts of the United States in the service of shoe manufacturing.

Kingsport, Tennessee, native Mike Hensley, the youngster of the Allegiance Footwear partnership, began his footwear career in 1973 at Genesco, Inc. in Nashville. Founded in 1924, Genesco is still a leading retailer of branded footwear that includes such household names as Johnston & Murphy and Dockers. As with Wallace's career, it did not take long for Hensley's superiors to recognize talent. Within four years, he was a department manager.

Through the 1970s and '80s, Wallace and Hensley honed their footwear manufacturing skills, albeit in different areas of the field. Hensley worked for Texas-based MicroDynamics, Inc., developing, selling, and training footwear manufacturers around the world in the use of computer-aided design (CAD) systems. In the meantime, Wallace coaxed every ounce of efficiency out of footwear manufacturing plants in Tennessee, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic.

In 1993, Wallace, then at Timberland, was offered another promotion—vice president of sourcing.

"What that is, you take a line of shoes, and you put them in a suitcase. It might be work boots, women's shoes—whatever it is—they go in that suitcase. In your briefcase, you have a list of how many pairs of shoes you need and the delivery date for those shoes. Then you go to China.

"You go to all those factories that make the product you want, leaving behind the shoe when you've agreed on how you want it made, price, and delivery times. Then you go to the next factory. You keep on doing that until the suitcase is empty. I told them I wasn't going to China, and that's when I left the company."

It was Hensley's work with MicroDynamics that eventually landed him at Timberland.

"I had travelled all over the world in my job at MicroDynamics, but the travel was beginning to affect my family. Timberland happened to be one of the companies I had demonstrated the CAD system for. They were going to buy a system for their plants in Hampton, New Hampshire; Puerto Rico, and Mountain City. The Timberland vice president of product development who came down [to Dallas] for the demo was someone I had previously worked with at Genesco. He asked me to come work for Timberland.

"I told him I was born and raised in Kingsport, seventy miles from Mountain City. I said that if I could be based out of Mountain City I'd come work for them. I initially reported to Hampton [New Hampshire], but after a while they had me reporting to Hugh [Wallace].

"When Timberland decided to have the uppers cut and stitched in the Dominican Republic, and said you'll [the Mountain City plant] just last [or form] the bottom . . . that's when I knew the end was coming."

Smell the smoke; feel the heat. By the time the Mountain City Timberland plant closed, Wallace was doing consulting work in Massachusetts. Soon thereafter, Hensley was also on the road selling his expertise.

"I'll never forget it," Hensley begins. "I was working on a pattern job in Arkansas. Some of us were sitting in the lunchroom, and someone said that one of the major shoe companies had an unreal amount of problem [he places air-quotes around the word] shoes sitting in a warehouse. The more I thought about that, the more I thought someone needs to open a business where you take that product, fix it, and get it back to the warehouse."

Mike returned to Mountain City from the Arkansas trip still "chewing" on his niche market idea. He finally decided to talk with Hugh about it. The next day they were looking at equipment Timberland had yet to move from the Mountain City plant. World Class Footwear Repair Service was born.

It is a delicious piece of irony that these two men, with their reverence for the craft of shoemaking, who have spent their adult lives staying one step ahead of outsourced manufacturing, should find a livelihood repairing outsourced shoes.

"What used to happen when there were lots of shoe factories in this country," Hensley begins, "is that if a problem got by quality control, and a vendor or customer complained, the manufacturer sent it back to their factory. Now that all the factories are gone, you cannot just turn around and send it back to the factory."

Mike Hensley (left) and Hugh Wallace (right) at their store in Mountain City. Photo by Randy Sanders.

Wallace adds, "It takes about three months to get the product back over there, and three months to get it back here. By that time, the season's over with."

To reinforce their point, one now hears a newer word in manufacturing circles: "on-shoring." Retail companies like American Apparel, Gap, Macy's, and Kohl's have increasingly embraced U.S. manufacturers. Given escalating transportation costs, increases in Chinese labor costs, and quality control issues, buying made-in-America goods looks more attractive to an increasing number of company executives.

Today, Wallace and Hensley's business is called Allegiance Footwear, to reflect their business model. While a large percentage of their daily labor is still repair work (refinishing, minor stitching repairs, mold/mildew cleaning, antimicrobial applications, replacing soles), they have also diversified their manufacturing portfolio to include consultation, prototype development, and specialty projects. They hire temporary employees as work orders permit, many of them ex-Timberland personnel.

It is, however, in a visit to their web site, www.allegiancefootwear.com, where one sees the culmination of Wallace and Hensley's partnership. They now produce their own line of work/hunting boots. Sold only through the web site or at their company store in Mountain City, these boots exude quality. Like many carefully realized objects, passion undergirds their making.

"We considered wholesaling our boots, but all the retailers we have contacted want us to wholesale them at a 'China price' so they can mark them up 63.5 percent. We make a very small margin as it is, and we refuse to cheapen our product. We are content to sell fewer boots rather than make a less-than-quality product," Hensley says.

The web site testimonials bear out the wisdom of Wallace and Hensley's approach to making shoes. Alan, in Lyons, Georgia, writes:

Just wanted to say I have had all kinds of boots and these are the best and most comfortable pair that I've ever owned. Great fit and finish. Top notch customer service also. And last but not least, MADE IN THE USA!!! not China.

Before we say our goodbyes, I ask Hugh and Mike if they would consider moving their business to a larger city.

"This is home," Hugh says. "This is the best place I've ever lived. The people who worked in the Timberland factory were the best bunch of people I've ever worked with in my life. I've already bought my cemetery plot, if that tells you something." He smiles.

Mike adds, "I've had several opportunities to go elsewhere, and I turned them down just because I wanted to stay in Mountain City. I'll never leave."

When Mountain City's Timberland plant closed fifteen years ago, over 300 people were displaced. Fortunately, for anyone now wearing a pair of Allegiance Footwear's boots, pride in one's work was not also outsourced. ❖

Randy Sanders is managing editor of *Now & Then* magazine.

FIND TWO MORE AND CIRCLE UP FOUR: DANCING AN APPALACHIAN BIG CIRCLE SET

Caitlin Kight

There are many things in America that can be traced back to our British colonial roots—language is an obvious one, including some of our more colorful turns of speech and obscure "country sayings"; certain foods like the Sunday roast; melodies such as "America," which originated as the British national anthem, "God Save the Queen/King"; and superstitions like associating the breaking of a mirror with bad luck, a piece of "wisdom" taught to Brits by the Romans. On the other hand, the list of British-isms that have made the journey from Britain to America and back again is quite a bit shorter. One item on this list is a style of country folk dancing called Appalachian Big Circle Dancing, or just Big Circle Dancing. Related forms are known as Big Circle Clogging and Kentucky Running Set.

Although Big Circle Dancing was originally brought to the New World by British settlers, it was soon flavored by French, Native American, and West African seasonings. The dance that emerged from the colonial melting pot was truly a New World product. It centers on the formation of *figures*, or shapes made by the motions of the dancers as they move across the floor. The emphasis is on movements of the feet and legs, rather than those of the hands/arms and torso. This is particularly true of dances performed in Southern Appalachia. Figures are made by pairs of partners—traditionally only two pairs, though some more modern figures require four. Many figures in Appalachian Big Circle Dancing are still found in the English country dances that were popular during the colonial period and have been preserved over the centuries. These have poetic names such as "Queen's Highway" and "King's Highway" (in which the women and men, respectively, perform the predominant movements), "Wring Out the Dishrag," "London Bridges," and "Dive for the Oyster."

BCD and its derivatives are as simple or as complex as the dancers desire. They begin with multiple pairs joined in a single circle, where women are usually positioned to the right of their male partners. After some brief introductory maneuvers, the partners split into two- or four-pair groups, as appropriate. The timing of this process, and the selection of figures that follow, are decided by "callers," a uniquely American contribution to organized dance. Callers are responsible for remembering all possible figures that can be formed and provide the dancers with brief instructions ("patter") for how to achieve them. Callers can be outside the group of dancers (such as those who "officiate" during another

Photo courtesy Cliff Wiegand.

classic British-American style, the Square Dance) or can call while participating in the dance. Although figures are standardized for all BCD callers and performers, individual callers can infuse the dances with their own personal touches by including or omitting any figures they wish, and by calling them in whatever order they desire. In keeping with its "wild and wonderful" reputation, West Virginia was one of the last holdouts where callers' innovations were still producing unique step styles not included in repertoires elsewhere.

As one might expect, all of this is performed to a backdrop of rousing music. Originally, Celtic fiddling was most popular among many settlers. Later, the mandolin, guitar, and banjo were added to create a toe-tap-inducing form of bluegrass. The meter and tempo are not consistent across all BCD performances; however, many Appalachian communities use meters of 2/4 and 4/4, with 130-160 beats per minute. In performances that involve clogging, the clogged step is performed in time to the downbeat, with the heel keeping rhythm. It should come as no surprise that the word "clog" is derived from the Gaelic word for "time."

The major difference between BCD and Big Circle Clogging is that in the latter, the figures are performed with the sort of vertical embellishments typified by the Irish theatrical show *Riverdance*. At least one source claims that the origins of the clogging steps found in BCC can be traced to British mill towns, where mill workers with thick-soled shoes would have dance-offs on the cobblestone streets during their lunch breaks. Regardless, BCD predates BCC, which became widespread only after a transition period during which clogging became increasingly popular—slowly, since it was originally considered rude for clogging (or "stepping," as it was originally known) to be performed while dancing in partner figures. Because the extra energy, space, and precision required for clogging can make routines difficult, it became increasingly popular in competitive settings or during dances meant for display purposes, as opposed to social recreation. One such display was the origin of the Kentucky Running Set style, so named because its rapid performance requires dancers to run in order to complete their figures in time to the music. An alternative explanation for the name is that it describes the speed with which dancers perform the entire "set," or catalog of figures. Either way, the defining characteristic of KRS is movement so quick that no fancy footwork is even possible.

This "method" was actually the product of a practical joke played by the residents of one Kentucky town who demonstrated an unnaturally fast BCD for Cecil Sharp, a Brit who traveled across America to document "folk" traditions—particularly those associated with music. Sharp failed to realize that he'd been misled and is responsible for introducing the KRS style to Britain and popularizing its aerobically-challenging maneuvers among contemporary British folk dancers. Though Sharp's research methods and findings have since come into question, it is impossible to deny his role in sowing the seeds of a revolution that led to an explosion in the popularity of folk culture in both the United States and the United Kingdom.

Other contributors to this revolution include Bascom Lamar Lunsford, also known as the "Minstrel of the Appalachians," who, in 1928, helped organize the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival in Asheville, North Carolina—an annual event that occurs to this day and is considered the nation's oldest folk festival. Included in the original lineup was a folk dance competition offering a cash prize for first place, won by the Soco Gap Dancers, formed by Sam Queen. This group was notable not only for being talented dancers but also for exposing a wider audience to American folk dance. They performed their traditional mountain dance steps in a variety of non-Appalachian venues, including the White House while it was being visited by the Queen of England. Reportedly, Her Royal Highness was not immune to the infectious rhythms and was observed tapping her foot in time to the music. Afterward, she supposedly likened the country dance footwork to that of British clogging. Ever since, the word "clogging" has eagerly been applied to many styles of traditional American group dancing, regardless of their origins.

In the following two decades, Dr. Lloyd "Pappy" Shaw, who ran the Cheyenne Mountain Schools in Colorado Springs, Colorado, further disseminated folk

Photo courtesy Charlie Warden.

dance by touring with a high-school exhibition team, the Cheyenne Mountain Dancers, and by publishing several books on traditional music and dance steps. Although he focused on clogging and square dancing, his efforts to document, preserve, and standardize calling instructions affected BCD and its derivatives because of the interrelatedness and similarity of these traditional American dance formats. Because of his work with adolescents and his efforts to teach older styles to younger dancers, Pappy Shaw was key in making traditional dance part of the culture handed down to future generations.

Bill Nichols, the "grandfather of modern clogging," made his mark on BCC by founding a dance school at the Fontana Resort in North Carolina. There, he educated countless teachers who spread his methods across the country. In 1971, the Carolinas gave birth to another important influence on BCD/BCC: the Green Grass Cloggers. Their style blended aspects of many traditional dances, including flatfooting and buckdancing, which had shaped the formation of BCD centuries earlier. The Green Grass Cloggers, in turn, influenced contemporary BCD and BCC. This was particularly true in the UK, where their form of "Appalachian dance" became even more popular and widespread than the KRS style introduced several decades earlier by Cecil Sharp.

Thus, approximately 300 years after its original introduction to the New World, old-fashioned country folk dancing was transported back to Britain and performed on its native soil. Although it had evolved a bit—new figures, new accompanying music, new types of practitioners—it was still recognizable as a descendant of its forebears. However, after blending with the influences of so many cultures, the new big circle dance variants were more multicultural than their ancestors. In this respect, the dances mimicked the populations of both the US and the UK, which also had become much more diverse over time. Interestingly, UK instructors who teach big circle dances are less focused on precision and competition; instead, they are more interested in preserving the traditional spirit of the dance—which, considering that they are teaching a style of the dance that most recently emerged from the mountains of North Carolina, is actually the traditional *Appalachian* spirit. Indeed, if you watch footage of No Mean Feet, an Appalachian dance team based in Somerset, England, you could easily believe you are watching a group of dancers from Kentucky or the Carolinas.

Modern BCD and BCC dancers—especially those in the US—find inspiration, in terms of both accompaniment music and performance technique, in a variety of styles: hip-hop, ballet, jazz, and folk dances from other countries and ethnic groups. In fact, there are plenty of recent club hits in which the rappers or singers act as callers, telling dancers to move "to the right, to the right," or "to the left, to the left." Thus, not only has Big Circle Dancing been influenced by many other music and dance styles, but it has been a source of inspiration as well. Some dance historians have noted that the whole BCD system replicates a community, where both leaders and followers are required to act in harmony in order to maintain organization and achieve their ultimate goal. In a way, the story of BCD also parallels that of the country in which it was developed—originating in Britain; with a small group of pioneers (the callers) who led the way for a larger group of settlers (the dancers); where a single initial settlement (the big circle) seeded countless other towns and cities (the two- or four-pair groups). Like the United States itself, Big Circle Dancing is the product of a blend of cultures, attitudes, and styles, its treasured traditions handed down from one generation to the next. ❖

The author would like to thank Jerry Childress Duke and the Applejacks Appalachian Dancers for answering her many questions about BCD, BCC, and KRS.

Caitlin Kight is a science editor for Editage, a professional editing service, and a freelance nature writer. She lives in Falmouth, the United Kingdom.

AROUND AND AROUND SHE ROLLS: ROLLER DERBY IN APPALACHIA

Rebecca Tolley-Stokes

During roller derby's heyday, the decades of the 1950s through the early 1970s, fans of the sport living in Appalachia watched it on television. There were no opportunities for men and women to join leagues and skate on the banked track since teams were based out of the San Francisco Bay. The revival of the sport started in Austin, Texas, in 2000. All-women leagues formed in Arizona in 2003, and other leagues followed in New York, Raleigh, Seattle, and Minneapolis. The Hard Knox Rollergirls of Knoxville, Tennessee; the Blue Ridge Rollergirls of Asheville, North Carolina; and the Steel City Derby Demons of Pittsburgh all formed in 2006, two years after the national organization overseeing the sport, the Women's Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA), was founded.

Early in 2006 two different groups of women wanted to form a roller derby league in Knoxville. They joined forces via Myspace, the popular social networking web site. Two of their founding members remain involved with Hard Knox today, "Sushi Roll" and "Beverly Killbilly."

Hard Knox is one of the smallest leagues to reach the WFTDA South Central Regional Tournament. Its teams compete against those from larger urban areas such as Dallas, whose skaters outnumber Hard Knox's twenty-three core skaters by two to three times. In addition to being outnumbered by sister leagues, Hard Knox athletes compete for audiences from a city and state whose sports fans are die-hard University of Tennessee Volunteers. Attracting local sponsorships from businesses is tough when a sports team contends with Tennessee football and basketball.

Historically, roller derby appealed to a broad fan base in its early decades—the 1930s, '40s, and '50s. By the '60s and '70s the sport, deemed "professional wrestling on skates," was associated with the lowbrow. Audiences could be volatile, and team promoters capitalized on their energy by encouraging theatrics from the skaters on the banked track and into the stands.

Another difference between old-school roller derby and today's new-fangled style are the skaters' names. Joan Weston and Ann Calvello, two recognizable

Hard Knox Rollergirls in fast motion. Photo by Rebecca Tolley-Stokes.

roller derby figures from the mid-twentieth-century, used their given names, but few of today's athletes do that.

Roller derby skaters enjoy anonymity. Skating under an assumed name offers skaters the opportunity to participate in the sport "under the radar," without public acknowledgment. Adopting an alter ego psychologically smoothes the way for skaters to body-check other skaters during bouts. Women and girls can forget about "playing nice" when they inhabit alter egos such as "Little Orphan Slammie." And lastly, creating an alter ego is just plain fun. Once a skater passes skills assessments and the WFTDA written rules test, she picks a name. Then she submits it to a web site to check it for uniqueness against other skaters. For instance, in Johnson City, Tennessee, a skater for Little City Rollergirls, "Noli Chuckya," based her name on the Nolichucky River that runs through upper east Tennessee.

Women and girls can forget about "playing nice" when they inhabit alter egos such as "Little Orphan Slammie."

Some skaters' names are bawdy, some are sweet, and others make cultural references. Skaters are allowed and encouraged to embellish their uniforms below the waist, but numbers and names must be clearly displayed during bouts. Officials adhere strictly to WFTDA guidelines before teams race and block each other on the flat track.

But below the waist, skaters display a range of accoutrements. Fans watch a whirl of sequins, ruffles, plaid, and polka dots. Pure athletes wear spandex beneath their shorts or skirts. Brightly-colored knee socks and tights make it easy for fans to identify their favorite skater and keep her in sight. Some skaters wear tulle tutus, while "Mean Josie Green" of the Greenville, South Carolina, Derby Dames wears football pants.

"Goblynn," Hard Knox's iconic skater, cites the Appalachian region's religious culture as a hurdle for roller derby to overcome before it can saturate the area: "Living in the buckle of the Bible belt is especially challenging for a progressive sport like roller derby."

WFTDA governs the number of leagues in the association and sets the standards for rules, seasons, and safety as well as outlining the guidelines for national and international bouts.

Women from Boone, North Carolina, formed Appalachian Rollergirls in 2010 and are practicing hard for their first match. They practice at a nearby skating rink, but many leagues are challenged by finding a permanent practice space. Locating an appropriate space and reserving it for bouts is tricky, too. The Steel City Derby Demons hold their home bouts at Romp n Roll, a skating rink outside Pittsburgh. Hard Knox outgrew their old venue and graduated to the Knoxville Coliseum. Leagues hold bouts at National Guard armories, fairgrounds, and abandoned airplane hangars. Holding bouts at civic centers, coliseums, and other sports venues lends leagues legitimacy and builds their reputation as an organized force in the community.

Roller derby leagues help local charities by donating proceeds from their bouts. Little City Rollergirls support Second Harvest Food Bank, the American Red Cross, Girls on the Run, and Agape Women's Center.

A progressive sport, roller derby is locally organized, owned, and operated by its skaters. Many leagues sponsor junior and Brat leagues that feed into their women's leagues. The Little City Derby Brats of Johnson City accept skaters from six to eleven years, as long as athletes are confident on quad skates. Brat and junior leagues are non-contact, with no smashing and bashing.

As a starter league, the Derby Brats scrimmage against each other in hopes that someday Brat leagues will spring up in the rest of the state and region. Johnson City's Brat league is one of three in the nation and was established in 2008 by Becky Earp and Teresa McKenna. The other Brat leagues are in Atlanta and Seattle.

The Appalachian region is at the forefront of the Brat league movement and is creating viable athletic options for young athletes. ❖

Rebecca Tolley-Stokes writes, takes photographs, and loves roller skating. Her article tracing the blue-collar origins of roller derby in motion pictures, "Tattoos and Tutus: Blue Collar Performances on Wheels," is forthcoming from ABC-CLIO's *Blue Collar Pop Culture: Sports, Music, and Everyday Culture*. She is an associate professor and librarian at East Tennessee State University.

DON'T JUDGE A CITY BY ITS LABEL

Carter Taylor Seaton

The facts are in. The reports have been released. The Huntington, West Virginia–Ashland, Kentucky, Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area is the most unhealthy place in the United States in which to live and raise a family. And the rest of Appalachia—particularly its southeastern section—doesn't fare much better. The tallies released in 2008, from a 2006 study by the Centers for Disease Control in which over 350,000 people were interviewed, also bolstered at least one well ingrained stereotype about the region: Forty-eight percent of people over sixty-five have had all their teeth extracted. Regrettably, the news reports about the study tagged Huntington as the epicenter of unhealthy living.

More alarming than the need for better dental care are the reported high rates of obesity, diabetes, and coronary artery disease. The study pegged obesity rates in eighty percent of the counties in Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia at forty-three to forty-four percent when the national average is twenty-six percent. Roughly ten percent of the population surveyed in the study suffers from diabetes, and almost twenty-two percent of adults over forty-five years of age reported a diagnosis of coronary artery disease.

The possible explanations for these alarming numbers are many. The CDC report also noted that nineteen percent of the area's residents live below the poverty level; that only thirteen percent have a college degree; and, at an average age of forty, they are older than the national average. The study concludes that people with more education will make more well-informed food choices. Those with more money tend to buy more expensive, healthier foods and take advantage of gyms or other exercise options.

Yet the number of pizza shops in Huntington alone exceeded the number of health clubs in the entire state of West Virginia.

Culture matters, too. While farming occupied much of our Appalachian ancestors' time, few farm or even garden now. Yet the habit of eating solid, filling meals heavy in fat, fried foods, sauces, gravies, beef, pork, and lots of bread has been handed down to today's cooks, along with the recipes for preparing them. Video games, television, and iPods have replaced kick-the-can, sandlot baseball, and bicycle riding for many of our youth.

Whatever the reasons, Huntington's new label caught the attention of Jamie Oliver, England's fresh food guru and self-proclaimed food revolutionary. He swept into town in late summer 2009, as some said, "to save us from ourselves." Amid announced plans for a six-week reality show starring Oliver and produced by Ryan Seacrest for ABC television, there were howls of protest that the study targeted Huntington specifically when the problem was really regional; that no bloke from England should be telling us how to eat; and that the show would worsen the negative stereotypes of West Virginians.

Jamie Oliver. Photo courtesy ABC/Holly Farrell.

Oliver, however, saw it differently. "The fattest city thing wasn't my main reason for choosing Huntington," he said. "I wanted to show the rest of the United States that

there was more to Huntington than just that unfortunate badge. Besides, there are towns and cities all over the USA and all over the world with the same problems as Huntington. I could easily have chosen part of Chicago, or New York, but I wanted a place that anyone could recognize as 'home'—with great people, a great community, and a real desire to make things happen."

During his visit, Oliver confronted the Cabell County Board of Education about the lack of fresh foods in the school cafeterias, offered cooking classes in his downtown kitchen, and spent a lot of time trying to win converts to his way of eating, all while filming the series. He found kids who didn't recognize vegetables, people who admitted they never cook at home, and a mortuary that supplies coffins for obese people too big to fit into a hearse. The ensuing controversy made great television, but in the end, he had won over the school cooks, the Board of Education, and the public, for the most part. And he'd solicited two sizeable donations from one area hospital to incorporate fresh food into school menus for the rest of the year, as well as for a community group, Ebenezer Medical Outreach, to continue operating what is now called "Huntington's Kitchen."

On balance, the television Klieg lights missed a few things about Huntington that indicate some citizens had been trying to improve their health and that of the community before Oliver arrived. Over 10,000 men, women, and children—about one-fifth of the city's population—are members of the local YMCA. A twenty-six-mile walking and biking trail—the Paul Ambrose Trail for Health (PATH)—around the city was conceived in 2008 and memorializes a promising young doctor who was conducting research on the escalation of obesity in the United States before his death at the Pentagon in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Funds are being raised to complete the trail. Since February of 2009 volunteers and area businesses have been working together to transform derelict or vacant lots into community gardens all over the city, in an effort to educate the public on nutrition, the environment, stewardship, and civic responsibility.

In the months since Oliver left town, other changes have taken place. Chef John Palowitch with Sodexo, Marshall University's food service company, says Oliver's Food Revolution brought about new approaches in campus dining, with smoothies, fresh omelets, and hard-boiled eggs in the dining halls and Egg Beaters to come. At the campus daycare center, fresh salads and carrot sticks replaced highly sweetened Jell-O.

One roadblock Oliver encountered in trying to replace processed food with more items made from fresh ingredients has now come down. The USDA has agreed to assist Cabell County schools to ensure the new recipes introduced by Oliver will comply with federal standards. In July 2010, U.S. Representative Nick J. Rahall of West Virginia introduced a bill that would create a competitive grant program, in states with thirty percent obesity rates for children and adults, for schools that include fresh foods in the meals they provide. Five years earlier, West Virginia had implemented Institute of Medicine recommendations that exceed the current standards for school nutrition.

Still, what we eat is a personal choice. All anyone, Jamie Oliver included, can do is try to educate the public about the value of healthy eating and exercise and provide the means to do so. But until Huntingtonians and Appalachians in general make up their collective minds to change, moving toward being the healthiest place in America will be as slow as molasses in January. ❖

Carter Taylor Seaton is a freelance writer living in Huntington. Her article on West Virginia's back-to-the-land artisans won a Denny C. Plattner award in 2007. Her debut novel, *Father's Troubles*, was published in 2003.

Photo courtesy ABC/Holly Farrell.

SCORING WITH METTWURST AND BEANS

Fred Sauceman

On the Cumberland Avenue "strip" in Knoxville, Tennessee, hamburger steaks fried by Greek cooks have given way to turkey wraps and fruit smoothies. Descending into the beery Roman Room for a Vol Burger is only a memory. Sam & Andy's steamed sandwiches have moved west of town. Drugstore check-cashing for students has virtually disappeared. Cottage cheese croquettes from the University of Tennessee's Sophronia Strong Hall cafeteria were abandoned years ago.

Bordering the UT campus, the crowded roadway is testament to the changing tastes and fashions of college students. One restaurant, though, has held out, avoiding the squeeze of chain restaurants, its signature dish defying most diets. Today's Old College Inn opened in 1939 as Brownie's, and platters of mettwurst and beans still anchor the menu.

"Brownie's was an old-style diner like you might see in a five-and-dime, with a flat grill, old stools, a guy in a white shirt and paper hat, cooking grilled cheese and burgers and offering up plate lunches," says Mike Clark, who owns the Old College Inn with his brother Randy.

Mike says the owners who sold them the business in 2002 were adamant that it not be bought by a corporation and specified that the restaurant should remain in the hands of UT alumni.

For faithful fans of the Big Orange, mettwurst and beans are treasured on the same level as "Rocky Top" and the Pride of the Southland Marching Band. The sausages are scored, steamed in a sandwich steamer, and finished off on the grill. They come to the table boldly, encircled by home-cooked white beans, homemade chili, a garnish of onions, relish, raw horseradish, and a side of pumpernickel bread.

"What makes the metts special are the spices and the type of casing," Mike reveals. "Most customers cut the sausages in bite-sized pieces and dip them in the beans and chili, then sometimes the relish, onions, and horseradish—a bite of everything. Then they sop up all the leftover gravy from the beans with the bread. It's a stick-to-your-ribs meal."

When the name changed to Old College Inn in 1972, hot plate specials like turkey and roast beef dinners were joined on the menu by hamburgers, catfish

Mettwurst and beans. Photo by Tom McNutt.

sandwiches, and Cheese Bing appetizers—cubes of cheese that are breaded, deep-fried, and served with marinara sauce or honey mustard.

Throughout the restaurant, headlines proclaim the glories of UT sports: "Lady Vols Nation's Best"; "Sugar Vols Are Perfect"; and "Big Orange Snake Hisses on 'Strip' as Post-Game Frenzy Hits Streets," above the story of Tennessee's dramatic 28-27 football victory over Alabama on October 21, 1984.

In what the brothers call the Annex, the Russ Bebb Collection of historic UT sports photographs salutes former wide receiver and track star Willie Gault and the late defensive lineman Reggie White. Bebb, who wrote for the *Knoxville Journal* newspaper, worked as a spotter and statistician for popular play-by-play broadcaster John Ward during UT football broadcasts and as official scorer for Volunteer basketball games. Ward called him "the human adding machine."

"My father and I played golf with Russ a lot," Mike remembers. "After he died in 2004, his widow La Wanda allowed us to go through his archives and take out anything we wanted."

The Clark brothers are conservators of Knoxville's past. The walls of their Cumberland Avenue bar and restaurant chronicle the sports history of their alma mater while their menu preserves a 70-year tradition of serving mettwurst and beans, stiff with horseradish, awash in chili, and safe from passing fads. ❖

Fred Sauceman is the editor of *Cornbread Nation 5: The Best of Southern Food Writing* (University of Georgia Press 2010) and collaborated on the recently released *Southern Foodways Alliance Community Cookbook* (University of Georgia Press 2010).

Photo by Fred Sauceman.

"GOOD AFTERNOON, I'M MAXINE HUMPHREYS FOR DOUGHTY-STEVENS"

FRED SAUCEMAN

Maxine Humphreys gets around Greeneville, Tennessee. Within her paneled and cinderblocked office on Arnold Road, she keeps up with her community, from church suppers in Glenwood to revivals in Chuckey, from Lord's Acre sales at Orebank to baptisms in Horse Creek.

She's been called the "eyes and ears" of Greene County. The voice, too. Since May 20, 1953, she has delivered "Local News" on AM 1340, WGRV, every weekday at 12:30 p.m.

It's almost a sacred time of day in the county. Farmers schedule their midday dinner around Maxine's news. Some doctors refuse to take appointments then.

Maxine Humphreys is one of the first people in Greeneville to find out when new babies are born, and she's one of the first to learn when a family has lost a loved one. Although she no longer reads real estate transfers and marriage licenses on the air, she has continued to announce every obituary sent to her by the town's funeral homes.

Hers is one of the longest-running news broadcasts in the history of radio and television. And although she does acknowledge that her program is rated number one in the region for its time slot by Arbitron, she's quick to deflect any personal accolades.

"There is a great satisfaction in knowing that you're serving people," she says. "I really believe this, that I've been where God wanted me to be, in my lifespan. It's been a journey, and I have served the people of Greeneville and Greene County."

She clearly remembers the questions that WGRV general manager Paul O. Metcalfe asked of her when the station was searching for a newscaster back in 1953.

"And one of the questions was, 'Do you plan to stay with this job?' And I said, 'Yes I do. I plan to stay.'"

She was as good as her word. Although she's now on a part-time, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. schedule, "Local News" continues. In fact, the program has had the same sponsor all these years—Doughty-Stevens, a business that dates to 1892.

Left: Maxine Humphreys at WGRV in 1959. Photo courtesy WGRV Radio. Right: Maxine Humphreys at WGRV in 2010. Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

When Doughty-Stevens started sponsoring local news in 1953, the company dealt in furniture and funerals. The furniture part of the business has fallen by the wayside, but the funeral home still operates, and it is the sole sponsor for Maxine's broadcast.

Longevity is a watchword at WGRV, a station that went on the air in 1946. The station is still in the Metcalfe family, now the third generation.

"I hold my employers in high esteem," Maxine says. "Paul Metcalfe is one of the most intelligent people I know. He's an electrical engineer. One thing Paul taught me—he was a great teacher—he was strict—but he told me, 'If you don't understand what you're going to broadcast, your audience won't understand it either.' So I write and rewrite, and I read and I reread everything before I go on the air."

In an era when the time allotted to local news on radio has gotten drastically shorter, and in some markets is even nonexistent, Maxine Humphreys has no time limit on her newscast. It may go for fifteen minutes, even twenty, or longer.

"I know some of the larger stations probably wouldn't allow that," she admits.

Maxine says she regrets that time doesn't allow her to read the names of pallbearers and honorary pallbearers. With her black magic marker, she carefully goes through each obituary, eliminating what she calls "superfluity."

"When I have fifteen to twenty obituaries, it's a little difficult to get everything in," she adds. "But every person's news is important to them.

"One lady that lived in Jefferson City (about 45 minutes away) said, 'I lay on the floor so I can pick it up.' The people here are so pleased when we make the news personal, just like when we mention birthdays."

Maxine Humphreys' story is not so much about surviving the vast changes in radio broadcasting technology that have taken place since 1953. It's more about continuity. What she covers today in her daily newscast is largely unchanged from the 1950s.

Back in 2001, a camera was mounted in the studio, so that Maxine's "Local News" could be carried on the cable television system. But that didn't change her delivery.

"T.O. Luttrell Jr. (a friend) said to me, 'Maxine, turn around toward the camera when you're doing the news, so they can see you in the face,' and I said, 'Well, you know, I'll try it.' So I tried it one time, and I was out of character, so I don't do that anymore."

Maxine's work at WGRV isn't limited to what goes on the air at 12:30. She's responsible for seeing that the "Citizen of the Day" is properly honored, and she's the radio bingo coordinator.

"That doesn't sound like it takes a lot of work, but it does. I have to mail out beautiful cards to each person who is named Citizen of the Day. Greeneville Light and Power is the sponsor. Also I keep up with the bingo that's on the radio station daily, Monday through Friday. I have cards that I give out to people. If they mail me a self-addressed, stamped envelope, I mail them a bingo card."

Over the years, Maxine has shared her broadcasting knowledge with dozens of young people who got their start at WGRV. I'm one of those lucky and grateful pupils, as is Nathan Humbard, who has worked at the station, alongside Maxine, for twenty-nine years.

"Maxine and I figured up one day a long time ago that I have probably put her on the air more times, more daily newscasts than any other announcer that we've had here," Nathan says. "We've been through the changeover to computers together, we've been through the change of studios together, all kinds of things that we have learned together, how to adapt, to keep this job going."

"It gets in your blood," Maxine adds. "It gets in your blood." ❖

Fred Sauceman, editor of *Now & Then*, started working at WGRV radio in Greeneville, Tennessee, when he was fifteen years old.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS AT 7:35

Dory Adams

Summer evenings at fifteen. The daughter, alone in the backyard on an outgrown swing set, too young to escape the rural landscape and too old to find joy in childhood games. Caught between, she marks time swinging under the ash tree at the edge of the yard. She looks to the east, to the horizon beyond neighboring hayfields, with her back to the house. Arms lightly sunburned, hands on the chains. Legs pumping high in the air, she leans back, long hair brushing the ground, feet reaching for the sky. Impatient. Not knowing how time will speed up later, accelerating with the accumulation of years until she'll long for these slow summer days.

A new portable radio connects her to the outside, reassures her that there's a bigger world beyond this valley. The glowing green dial tunes in AM and FM, but mountain ridges block most air waves until late at night when stronger signals from Wheeling and Chicago can reach her. In early evening, clear reception is limited to one local station playing the Top Ten Countdown until 7:35, when she will get only static. One station fading into the next, voices intertwined, layered, displaced—as though not quite dialed-in, between stations. During this last half-hour of music in the deepening shade, she's always hopeful that on *this* night there'll be no announcement about compliance with FCC regulations to cut back the signal's power. That the music will not fade out. That the connection will not be lost.

The evening hours are the longest. Waiting, with everything still out there somewhere in the distance, ahead. The fields chirp and hum with insect sounds, a natural static. A first cutting has been done, the scattered bales of hay leaving a sense of emptiness. As light fades and cools, blackbirds with red-tipped wings surge up from the field into the air, taking flight. ❖

Dory Adams earned her MFA from Vermont College. Her work has appeared in various literary journals, and she writes a weekly blog, *In This Light*, at www.doryadams.com.

Illustration by Amanda Marsh.

NOTES IN THE KEY OF STAYING

Richard Hague

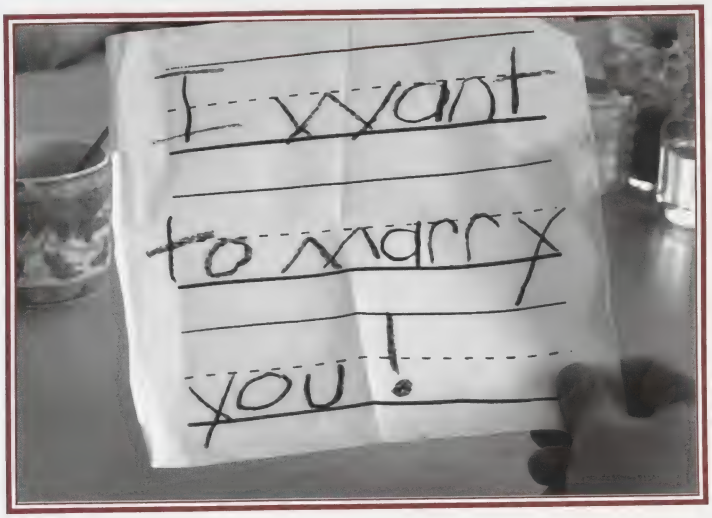
Be the scarlet tanager on the high wire.
Each day, enter the white pine needles.
Copperhead. Puff Adder. Corn Snake.
Gravestones in the last sun of a hot day.

Be the box turtle in Troublesome, plodding upstream,
expectant and hungry, headed towards sources.
Be what the creek feels like to a heron's legs,
how the bee turns in a wink to a dot of sun.

Richard Hague is a native of Steubenville, Ohio, in the Appalachian coal and steel country of the upper Ohio River Valley. His most recent poetry collection is *Public Hearings* (Word Press).

FAMILIAR

Chris Wiewiora



The subject line said, "For Christopher…" My full name. "For" suggested something like a present. Ellipses at the end of the heading stopped me from immediately opening the message. What if it was a virus? Some people had simply opened e-mails to them titled "I love you."

The "From" field read "Sheena Phillips," a common name. I knew a Phillips, but an older woman—a friend of the family. She worked in Washington, D.C., for the Department of Agriculture. But there was no way they were related. Sheena, with two e's.

The name sounded familiar.

I opened the e-mail:

Hi Christopher, It's Sheena Phillips from first grade. I got your e-mail address from your aunt in Buckhannon. I hope that's ok? I was thinking of you. I've been going to Virginia Tech. I wonder what you're up to. Love, Sheena

My name is Christopher. She was a Sheena Phillips. I do have an aunt in Buckhannon, West Virginia. What does "thinking of you" mean? What was this Sheena Phillips up to? And "Love." That was a strong word. She signed her name, that double *e* vowel sound.

Buckhannon, West Virginia—a small town with a main street called Main Street lined with thrift stores, pharmacies, banks, and one hardware store and bookstore. My grandparents lived in a house on West Victoria Street, The Hill. Not *a* hill, *The* Hill. Every day, I walked down The Hill to Academy Elementary School. I held my hand above my head as I crossed the street at the light, so the truckers could see me. On rainy days when we couldn't go outside for recess, we got to watch videos on a TV. A hundred kids sat "crisscross applesauce" on the wood-floored gym.

There were two choices of public broadcasting: Mister Rogers' Neighborhood or Barnie the Purple Dinosaur. In theme song alone, "It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood" kicked the feel-good brainwashing lyrics of the "I love you / You love me." Democracy was the only way to decide, with a vote of hands.

First, Mr. Rogers was ayed in. More than half of the hundred voted in favor. Second, Barnie was up. Now, I had already voted for Mister Rogers. I liked his Land of Make Believe, even though the hand puppets were creepy. But I watched to see who raised their hand for Barnie.

In purple sweatpants and Barnie underwear pulled above her elastic waistband, Sheena Phillips sat in front of me. My mom told me that Sheen Phillips was cute when she came to volunteer in our classroom. My teacher told everyone Sheen Phillips was cute. I raised my hand along with that cute girl, seconding the motion for Barnie.

I wasn't the only person to double vote. Many of Mr. Rogers' kids had second thoughts. They must have followed other cute girls' hands up, too.

For the next half-hour, a gymnasium full of a hundred elementary school kids sat glued to the screen watching the purple dinosaur. I watched Sheena, while the rain's pitter-pattering matched the flickers of the fluorescent lights.

Photo courtesy Amanda Marsh.

I pulled out a photo album and surveyed the lineup of six kids from my summer birthday party in 1993. The girl with her arm around my shoulder, straight brown hair flowing over her corduroy overalls, was Sheena Phillips.

My parents had allowed me to have a guest list equaling my upcoming age. I invited a balanced boy-girl ratio. There was an acre-wide scavenger hunt on The Hill. We finished the party with the best cake ever. It was chocolate, chocolate, chocolate. Frosting, mix, and ice cream. I don't remember the presents I got. After that summer, my family moved overseas and only came back to West Virginia over summers.

Sheena, I'm just here in Orlando going to the University of Central Florida. Funny enough, I'm actually going to be in Buckhannon. And yes, I do remember you. If you're in town, I'd love to grab a cup of coffee and catch up. –Chris

Damnit, there was that love thing again. *I meant, It'd be cool to see someone who I knew back in elementary school and see what they're up to. If they're a success or failure. If they're still cute.*

A week later I walked to The Daily Grind—the one and only coffee shop in Buckhannon. As I entered the café I saw Sheena. I believe people are recognizable all in their face. Sheena still had a perky nose, rounded cheeks to chin, and the same brown hair, but now streaked with blonde highlights.

It must have been harder to recognize me. I had glasses that I started to wear in sixth grade. No longer did I have a kid's bowl cut of dirty blonde hair. I had aged, going fully brown with matching facial hair.

There was an awkward moment of pause. I said her name in a question, "Sheena?" She said my full name, "Christopher." I started to stick my hand out for a cordial shake. She pushed her chair aside, put her arms through mine, and pulled me toward her. For a second's second, she set her head against my chest.

"It's good to see you," we both said.

Sheena started: movies, books, music, and college; in a truncated six degrees of separation. Our similar opinions intersected half the time.

I wasn't sure if we were interviewing each other or what. I thought we were having a conversation, but it turned into a competition. We tried to step up each other's accomplishments: Sheena wanted to go to Africa. I had lived overseas in the Eastern Bloc of Europe. I wanted to go on and get my master's. Sheena wanted a doctorate. Then she trumped me.

Sheena told me she walked past the Virginia Tech killer on her way to class.

The day of the massacre Sheena went from her dorm to her first class. On the way over, she spotted an Asian guy whom she sorta, kinda knew. No real connection other than routine repeated enough to imprint a memory.

Sheena watched the live news feed, found out who it was, and escaped from Blacksburg back to Buckhannon. Sheena stayed at home until the semester was over.

Small world.

I didn't feel I knew Sheena enough to ask her for more than she told me. I wondered how tight Sheena's parents held her and how soon they started to ask her questions and how much she told them. I wanted to switch the subject.

Sheena took out three letters written in my crayon second-grade script. The postage was Polish. The blue perforated sticker with a white goose silhouetted on it read Air Mail.

"I thought you'd want to see these." Sheena gave me three letters. I had written a romantic trifecta:

I like you. / I love you. / I want to marry you.

When I refolded the last envelope, Sheena said, "Isn't that cute? I was looking through my hope chest and found them."

"I can't believe I wrote those," I said out loud. I held tufts of my hair with one hand; in the other I covered my quivering mouth, pretending to scratch at stubble.

Now, I wanted to ask Sheena about the shooting. If she had escaped to an innocent memory; of maybe the first time a boy told her he loved her, thinking that if she held onto that she could feel safe, have a reason for living.

I gave my letters back to Sheena. I didn't tell her they weren't a reason for living. Instead, I said she could keep them safe in her hope chest. I didn't have a place where I kept things like them. I told Sheena I had to leave.

Sheena offered to drive me home up The Hill. The gravel road dinged against her car's body. We made small talk: *How long will you be in town? We should hang out again. You should e-mail me.* I said I would, but I wanted to escape from now knowing who she was.

I shut the door on Sheena Phillips. Maybe she thought the shooter story was enough to trap me. Sheena wasn't the cute girl anymore, but the survivor who had walked past death. The letters weren't an actual contract. Only a little boy's words. No man's promise. I heard the tires chomped by the road's gravel teeth as Sheena descended The Hill. ❖

Chris Wiewiora, a recent graduate of the University of Central Florida, is the assistant editor of *The Florida Review*. He works at a pizza place in Orlando called Lazy Moon.

WILLIE THE PHILOLOGIST

Steve Rasnic Tem

Words never came easily for Willie the child, named William then on his records, or Bill to teacher and the rest of that old town of Norton, first official city in Southwest Virginia, named after the president of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. "Willie" came much later, in that long, inarticulate tumble of years toward the end: a name he didn't care for, an insult, which stuck so easily to the lips of the town. But the words, they were hard-won, and prized. When he finally caught one he held onto it, squeezed it as if his life depended, until all its juice was gone. Then he saved the empties as if he might turn them in someday for pocket change.

Bill's passion lay undiscovered and unrecognized, except by his grandfather, who didn't care that Bill was shy, or verging on the slow, with hands and feet a disappointment to his brain. He only cared that it caused him pain.

"Fill your wagon full of words," his grandfather would say, "and drag that wagon with you on your journeys. When you need a proper word, you'll find you have just the one."

Bill knew his grandfather didn't mean a real wagon, but the old man loved to explain.

"I speak in metaphor, of course. Metaphors are strong language, stronger than curses, Bill, carrying as they do their own meaning as well as that of another. You understand that, don't you? About metaphor?"

Bill had been slow to nod. Although he usually managed to catch most of the words thrown at him, it was always a struggle pushing them out to his tongue. "Pa told me, yesterday? He said grab the bull? By the horns?"

"Good boy! You're a regular philologist, Billy!"

Bill blinked slowly. Twice. He'd never heard such a word. His tongue wrestled with it in silence. His panicked brain told him to spit it out—as beautiful as it was, he might choke.

"That means you're a lover of words, Bill! A bona fide lexical romancer!"

Bill smiled. His mother had always said it didn't really matter what Bill couldn't do—the most important thing was to love something. She told him, "That's the one true thing separating us from the lower animals."

Bill wasn't sure which animals were the lower ones. But sometimes she called them "beasts," like in that story she loved about Beauty and the Beast. That was one of the best things about words—they let you love

Illustration by Randy Sanders.

them. You could still love them, even when you didn't understand them. People ought to be like that with each other, but too often were not.

"Metaphor, Bill!" And Bill blinked again, trying to concentrate on the wagons full of words tumbling out of his grandfather's mouth. "About what your father said. Because, you know, there really isn't a bull."

Bill nodded. "No bull. No horns. Nothing I can grab on to."

"Exactly."

He wandered around his grandfather's house for days, just like he was sight-seeing, taste-tasting, smell-smelling, searching until he found it: a wagon that once was red but now was brown, with a bent axle and a bent handle.

"Pa got so, excited. When he talked, about the bull horn. It was important for me to understand! Like he wanted -- he could make a pretty song! Blowing on that horn! He was enthuse . . . elastic."

"Enthusiastic."

Bill nodded. "It was like, his arms stretched out, and his hands got all, wobbly, and his eyes got so big. He was all, bent, out of shape."

His grandfather looked sad. "He just wants you to do well."

"I'm okay," Bill said. "I was never sick, except the one time."

When his grandfather died, his mother and his father told him he could have anything he wanted out of the old house up on the ridge. Bill knew what he wanted but gave up trying to put the words together in the right order so they could understand. He wandered around his grandfather's house for days, just like he was sight-seeing, taste-tasting, smell-smelling, searching until he found it: a wagon that once was red but now was brown, with a bent axle and a bent handle.

When Bill was little, sometimes his father would say, "You don't stop that, I'm going to fix your wagon, young man." The memory made him smile so big, like his teeth grew until you couldn't see his lips anymore. His father had said he would fix his wagon, when it was his grandfather who had the wagon in need of fixing.

But he was glad his father never fixed this wagon. When Bill dragged it around the block like a flat dog on a leash, it made a sound like a sad flute player who loves a woman so much but he can't find the right words. The wagon never traveled straight down the sidewalk but wandered side to side smelling the grass.

A great wagon like that needed important things to carry so Bill took some of his grandfather's biggest books with hides thick and tough from crawling back and forth across that oak desk.

His father couldn't stop saying why. "Why, Bill, you can't even read those books. Why do you want them? Why, you have no clue what they're saying."

He wanted to tell his father he understood that was just metaphor. The books weren't saying anything, they were just lying now in his wagon asleep, dreaming their own dreams of being carried around fancy libraries in the arms of smiling lady librarians.

And maybe true Bill had no clue but those tough old books had big bellies full of words. He loved each word for itself and didn't care what it said. He didn't say much either but that didn't mean . . . just because he didn't say much didn't mean people didn't have to listen!

Bill was no good at stringing the words together, "making a sentence," which, as his grandfather explained, was like being a painter, or a sculptor. But sentences also made Bill think of judges—they made sentences, too, didn't they? Sentences could be sad stories that told you something nice or important happened, and then ended, period. Not being able to make sentences did give him time to admire the different words—they had their own lives, and a music, and a history, even if they weren't connected.

Now sixty years later and the few calling him by name call him Willie, but his Brown Bomber wagon is still that same vehicle of dreams. Its voice is rustier but so is his. It still carries those same big books plus a few passengers: a restaurant menu from where his Pa took him on his birthday the month before he died, a Christmas card with nine rhymes for "day" saved from a trash can, a newspaper telling a lie about someone he used to know, with eight ads for furniture stores, two of them Everything Must Go sales, and a clipped-out magazine story about an actress who died too young. It seemed like actresses were always dying too young and Willie had saved the story of the one to honor them all. A small box in one corner of the wagon holds everything else he owns: changes of socks and underwear, nice pants, toothbrush and soap, cup and plate, knife and spoon, assorted stale bites of food.

Still following his grandfather's words, Willie drags this wagon behind him everywhere he goes, but mainly up and down Park Avenue, Route 58, from the Dairy Queen to the steakhouse and back. Norton is a small place, or so everybody tells him, but it doesn't feel so small when you're on foot dragging your whole life. He has a sister in Atlanta and visited her once, where the

people live in houses folded over the top of each other, and the land's shrunk up to gardens and medians and yards. Here they've let the town relax out a little in a wide place in the road, but the mountains on each side show who's boss. It's a fine place to pull a wagon, and no one bothers him—he's never had one book stole. Over the years he has managed to learn to read a little, very little, but he is thankful for even that. He loves just saying the words.

He knows he isn't much more than a bump on the sometimes smiling, sometimes crying face of the earth, and not even as important as the words he loves. Still, he won't allow meanness to go unanswered. He knows what rude means, and he never lets it pass without repeating his grandfather's most important advice, "You can't tell a book, Bill, by its cover."

These days he has books to sell, assorted volumes from different sets of encyclopedias he's been letting go a dollar apiece. Mostly they go to teenagers who want to use the pictures or need to write a quick report and can't get to the computer up at the library. But last week a fine looking lady bought the J volume, because she liked junipers, and jellyfish, and agreed with Willie that Jupiter was the most interesting planet by far.

When people point out that the encyclopedias are old, and out of date, and can't be of much use in the time of the Internet, Willie just tells them how those books hold the history of what our best minds thought, even though they might have got it just a bit wrong, and what a great thing it was, what a marvelous thing, that the thinking of all those historians, all those scientists and philosophers, those philologists, could wind up in a rusty old wagon in the little city of Norton.

Sometimes Willie likes to think of himself as a single word, his favorite being *gregarious*—he learned it back when he was still Bill. His grandfather told him it meant he was still one of the flock. He thought it sounded like he was happy about it, too.

Rue was always another word that said loud and clear things he felt every day, sounding like something to eat, whether you wanted to or not, something you could fill your wagon with, a spoon full of sorrow, a cup of remorse, bowls overflowing with regret.

He also likes *slapstick,* and *pell-mell,* because of their sound. He isn't sure if he understands what either of them means, but he's pretty sure it's the same gang involved.

Most words are like that for Willie: He repeats them over and over for a time, but then their meanings always creep away, as if ashamed of themselves, and all he has left are their carcasses. But like most people, he thinks, it is hard for him to let go of dead things, and in his old age he sings their names aloud over and over in the town with no understanding: *inculcate, belated, ex cathedra,* down one street, then *Parthian, capitulate, cajole* down another, the people staring at him, or walking the other way, some of them laughing, with their own absence of understanding. They can't see that he just loves the words, and with his head back, mouth open, eyes streaming, singing, he has only followed his grandfather's advice and hitched his wagon to a star. ❖

Steve Rasnic Tem is a native of Jonesville, Virginia, and now lives in Denver, Colorado. He holds a B.A. degree in English education from Virginia Tech and an M.A. in creative writing from Colorado State University. A past winner of the British and World Fantasy Awards and author of over 300 published short stories, he has had recent appearances in *Asimov's SF Magazine* and the Woodland Press anthology *Appalachian Winter Hauntings*.

MAKING OUR MOVE

Karen Beatty

One day in 1957 Mamaw Jenkins turned up in Salyersville, Kentucky, ostensibly to visit us grandchildren, but with the intention of informing Mama that if she wanted to keep her husband, she'd best prepare to join him in Bloomfield, New Jersey, where he had gone to work with his brother. Mama, having never set foot outside rural Salyersville, must have been terrified and angry. Daddy, a freewheeling truck driver who had been sent to Europe during the war, didn't understand Mama's reluctance to leave the hills and hollows.

I'm guessing that paramount in Flo-Anna's ultimate decision to follow her husband Lonnie Lee Jenkins north was simply the welfare of her children. Mama understood that as a pre-teen I was coming of age in a risky social environment and that my brother Billy Dee, a serious student, deserved better educational opportunities than those afforded in the tiny town of Salyersville. My middle brother Gary would thrive anywhere, or so Mama imagined, but Luke, at age five, was already a handful, determined to run wild, with no possibility in Kentucky of starting school for at least another year. Likely to sustain her marriage and safeguard her children, Mama agreed to leave the mountains and the people who comprised the very fabric of her being.

The physical move was far less complex than the emotional shift. In truth, the only cargo of any value to my parents was their children. The night before the move to New Jersey, Daddy loaded Mama's meager belongings into the flatbed of a battered pickup truck on loan from his friend Artie Johnson. In the morning Mama roused us before sunrise. A seasoned truck driver, Daddy liked to beat the traffic by traveling either before daybreak or very late at night. Mama agreed for a different reason: "Let's us git out real early. I don't want the likes of ole Francis Fouts er that Dell Rae Minix a-hangin 'roun' beggin' ta go north with us. It'd be jist like seein' somebody a-drownin' and us runnin' off."

Daddy tossed the one decent mattress and all the blankets and quilts on top of the household items and tied everything down, so that we children had a place to sit and sleep in the back of the truck. Mama sat up

The author's aunt and brother with her in front of a rumble seat in Paintsville, Kentucky, in 1948. Photo courtesy Karen Beatty.

front in the passenger's seat with Luke in her lap. The child squirmed and whined in discomfort until Daddy slapped him hard; that quieted Luke, and also Mama, who was already acting cold and unforgiving about the move.

Despite our fear of Daddy's rage, from time to time one of us older children took a turn riding up front—squeezing between Mama and Daddy and around the gearshift and elbowing Luke out of the way. Because I suffered from motion sickness, the front seat, affording a less bumpy ride and better view, was particularly welcome. When I was stuck on the pile in the back of the truck, I could do little but close my eyes and try to sleep. So as not to provoke Daddy when I was up front, I sat real still and tried to stay awake as we whizzed past the Burma Shave signs posted like sentries along stately rows of corn and huge tobacco leaves flopping like elephant ears in endless fields.

At mid-day on the way to New Jersey, Daddy pulled over at a truck stop and slept a couple of hours while the rest of us took turns gathering wildflowers in the surrounding woods or nibbling snacks around a picnic table, quietly, impatiently waiting for him to wake up and continue the journey. Mama never complained, but I could tell it was hard on her. Later I found out she was six months pregnant at the time.

Silently, I vowed to stay in touch with my cousin and best friend Dell Rae Minix, and I actually wrote him a letter shortly after we arrived in New Jersey. Then, life just happened, in ways that separated Dell and me irrevocably. I would see him again, but never with a light heart.

The full impact of this transition from Appalachia did not register on my conscious mind until almost ten years later, in the early 1960s, when I saw the film version of John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. Watching the fictional Joad family of migrant workers pile onto the pickup truck with their simple belongings, I choked up and had to run to the restroom to hide my weeping and quell my nausea.

While my memories of leaving Kentucky were jolted by movie imagery, any recall of our arrival in Bloomfield, New Jersey, eludes me. Though I was almost eleven and resided in New Jersey the rest of my childhood, I never think of myself as having been raised there. The town of Bloomfield, as far as I'm concerned, belies its name. A suburb of Newark, it developed trucking and manufacturing industries after World War II and was predominantly populated by Italian and Polish immigrants determined to separate themselves—by more than a neighborhood—from the Negroes who had settled decades earlier in Newark. Daddy's brother Abner, nicknamed "Speed," developed a trucking business in Bloomfield, where Daddy went to work after he abandoned us to a shack in Salyersville, Kentucky. After an extended stint of driving sporadically for his brother's independent trucking company in Bloomfield, Daddy acquired a steady job making long-distance hauls between New Jersey and Chicago for the Chicago Express trucking company. On trips between New Jersey and Chicago, before we joined him up north, he sometimes diverted to Kentucky to visit us. I guess Lonnie Lee had good intentions, though, because the regular income from the trucking job enabled him to rent an apartment in a new housing project constructed for working people in Bloomfield.

For impoverished Appalachian transplants, the new apartment in Bloomfield seemed palatial: electricity and running water, a full kitchen with a gas stove, a bathroom with a tub and flush toilet, and wooden doors separating the individual rooms. Mama warned us children not to waste good water by flushing the toilet too often, but she allowed us to take a bath once a week by ourselves. It was not until I was fully grown that I understood what leaving the beloved hills and all her kin must have meant for Mama.

When we settled in New Jersey, everything in our lives and everyone in our family changed. In Kentucky, except for little Luke, we children attended a one-room school; in New Jersey, we were all placed in elementary grades on the basis of age. If ever there was a time when I was symbolically "born again," it was just after the move from Kentucky to New Jersey. In fact, most everyone in my family got a new name, if not a new identity. Mama became "Mother" or "Mommy" because no white folks in Bloomfield, New Jersey, said "Mama"; Daddy was referred to as "Dad" or "my Father." (Even Pappy and Mamaw, in absentia, became "Grandpa" and "Grandma.") During the roll call at school, Billy Dee was permanently anointed "William," and I was introduced as "Ella" instead of Ellie May.

There was a rather amusing and persistent development regarding nomenclature for Gary and Luke in New Jersey. When Gary's fourth-grade teacher, a kindly but geographically challenged man, noted that Gary was from Kentucky and bore the name Gary Cooper Jenkins, he announced to the class that a real cowboy had joined their ranks. The children loved it and immediately dubbed Gary "the cowboy." The nickname didn't seem like much of a stretch for Gary, who happened to be the handsome, strong, and silent type. Luke, the wild little brother who adored Gary, became, predictably, "Tonto," a nickname that would come to haunt him. Mama smiled when she heard the New Jersey children call Gary

"Cowboy." She was, after all, proud of the white fences, rolling hills, exotic bluegrass, and thoroughbred horses that are associated with the running of the Kentucky Derby in Louisville. Of course, my family knew that

Salyersville, and much of Kentucky, was more about mules than horses and more about grit and hollers than stately ranches. Still, it was a relief not to be deemed ignorant hillbillies by our northern neighbors.

Unlike in Kentucky where she held a job, Mama stayed at home in New Jersey. She never learned to drive—a suburban disability—so she couldn't venture out beyond the apartment complex and the nearby supermarket. We children were not used to having Mama at home every day, so we followed the Kentucky regimen of not relying on her for security, permission, or advice. To Mama's dismay, from day one in New Jersey we began to spend our days "gallivanting." Daddy, who drove long distance and hung around his brother and friends between runs, was rarely on the premises, but his absence was a blessing. Loosely knit, at best, in Kentucky, the marital relationship between Flo-Anna and Lonnie Lee Jenkins completely unraveled after the move.

In New Jersey Daddy was a fearsome despot: raging, sleeping fitfully, and yelling and cursing at Mama or us kids, often during supper. I came to associate mealtimes with terrifying scream bouts between Mother and Dad—bouts that frequently escalated to the point where Dad hit either her or one of us, and then stomped out of the house. He returned late at night, sheepish and silent, often complaining of a bad headache. No mention was ever made of the events that had transpired earlier in the household. As Mother's isolation grew and her unhappiness mounted, she unleashed increasingly furious denunciations of her husband's neglect. She complained incessantly to us kids about her misery. The anger and physical violence escalated until seemingly innocuous transgressions triggered Dad to throw things or pounce upon anyone within reach. During meals I picked at my food, barely getting anything down before I scooped up my new baby sister from the highchair and hid out in the back bedroom. Both William and I retreated into our schoolwork, while Gary and Luke wolfed down their food and raced outside to play sports or hang out with neighborhood friends. We kids made a pact to stand together in the face of Dad's abusive rage and Mother's hysterical fury. Whenever Luke and Gary saw our father's truck pull up, they hid under the beds or dashed out of the house. Unfortunately, the streets they took to in New Jersey were a lot more perilous than the fields and hills of Salyersville, Kentucky. Eventually, I would be victimized by a predatory theologian, and my youngest brother Luke would grow up to write a book called *Delinquency Lessons*. But of course, those are other stories. ❖

Reared in Appalachia near the temperamental Lickin' River, Karen Beatty savored the mighty Mekong while serving as a Peace Corps Thailand Volunteer in the 1960s. She finally settled in Greenwich Village, between the Hudson River and the East River on the isle of Manhattan, where she teaches counseling at John Jay College of the City University of New York.

The author with her cousin and brother in Salyersville, Kentucky, in 1949. Photo courtesy Karen Beatty.

A WRINKLED HEART

Cathy Kodra

Birdie wore her man's plaid flannel shirts and baggy khaki
pants, dragged across a sprawling expanse of scratched
hardwood, while her farm hands turned and pleaded
with dough enfolding goat cheese, spinach,
basil leaves and Birdie's

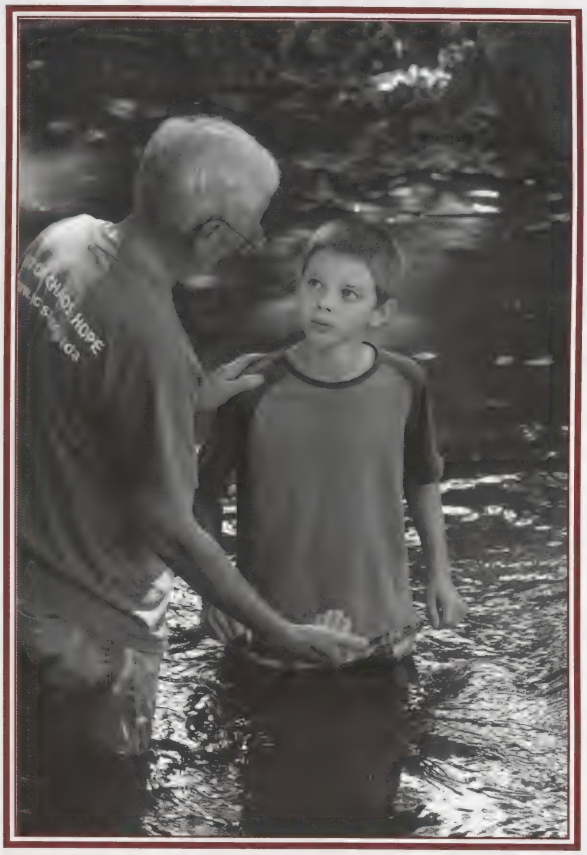
panic, baked into a desperate state, and the screen
door slammed and he was gone, almost
before she could turn and plead. All this quietly
arose on a back street as the world watched
and her patch of land burned and cracked open into ruts
filled with broken days, failed seeds once set aside for new
rows.

Birdie hummed
Unchained Melody, a tune her man had sung
with her in harmony many times before this angry drought
wrought a wrinkle in her heart the size of one of those gulches
the cowboy in the black hat uses for cover in clever Westerns.
You know the sort – he always gets away, but shows
up for the sequel.

Cathy Kodra, a New York transplant, lives, writes, and edits in Knoxville, Tennessee. Her short stories and poetry have appeared widely, and she is a contributing editor for *New Millennium Writings*.

A COVE CREEK BAPTISM

Mary Hayes



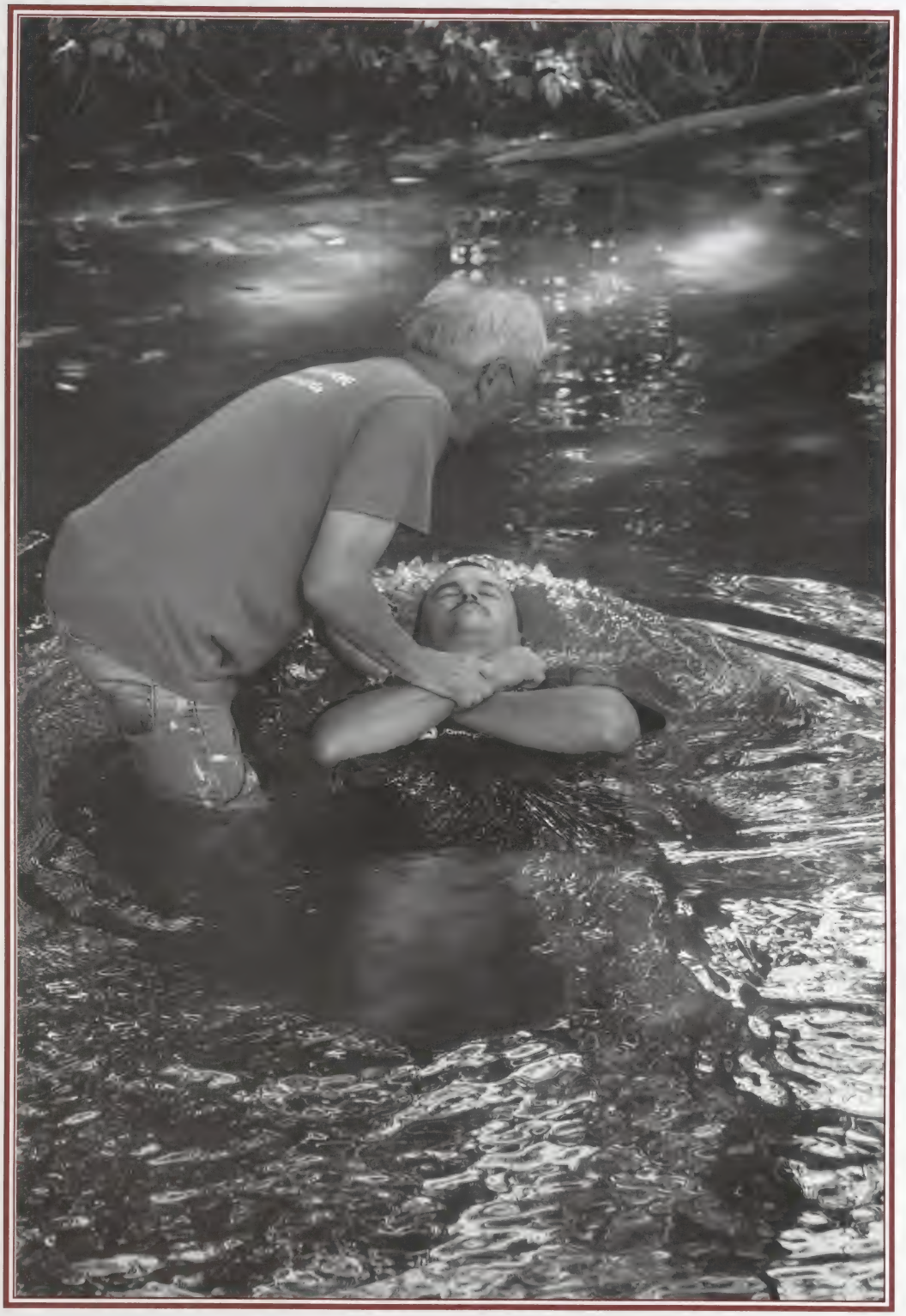
Micole McKay listens as Pastor Harrell talks to him about the baptism ceremony.

On Sunday, August 8, 2010, members of the Cedar Creek Presbyterian Church gathered on the banks of Cove Creek, in the Cedar Creek community, to participate in an old-fashioned immersion baptism ceremony. The temperature was in the high nineties, and the humidity made it feel much hotter, as fourteen people lined up to go down into the water. While the majority wished to be immersed in the cool water of the creek, a few chose to be sprinkled rather than dunked.

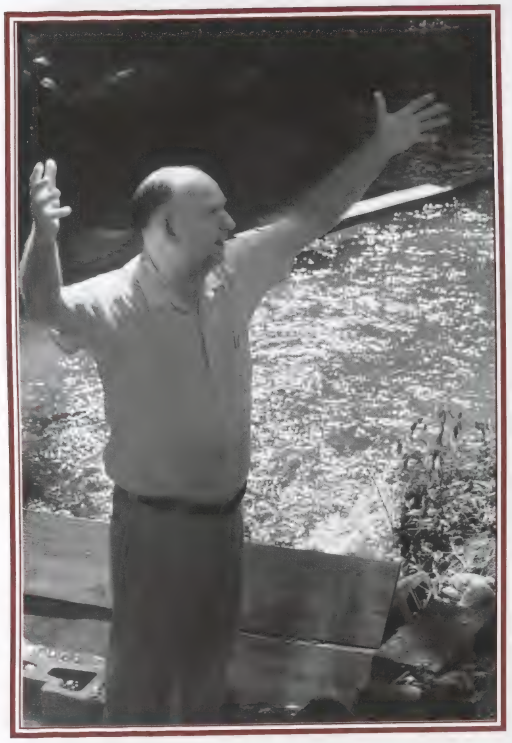
In many modern churches, baptism ceremonies are performed indoors, where individuals are immersed in giant tubs often located behind the pulpit. Before modern technology made these indoor immersion pools available, many rural congregations used local water sources such as rivers or creeks. One such community still honoring this tradition is Cedar Creek, located in southern Greene County, Tennessee. Cedar Creek is a farming community tucked into the mountains separating Tennessee and North Carolina, where mountain vistas, rolling pasture lands, and rivers and creeks have managed to stay relatively untouched by urban sprawl.

The community is home to many families who can trace their roots back generations. Beryl Freshour, a lifelong member of the community, recalls being baptized in Cedar Creek in 1946. On this August day, she sits on the banks of Cove Creek and watches her daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter being baptized here as well. ❖

Samantha Wilcox, who was born and raised in the Cedar Creek community, and whose mother and grandfather were also baptized in the community, smiles as she prepares to be immersed in the water.



Jamie Ellenburg rises from the water after his immersion.



Reverend Faye Lynn Ricker addresses the crowd assembled on the banks of Cove Creek.

Pastor Harrell Cobb and Faye Lynn Ricker prepare Walter Graham for baptism in Cove Creek.

Walter Graham and his daughter, Olivia, join in prayer after their baptism.

Mary Hayes is a photographer currently pursuing a master's degree at East Tennessee State University. A native of Greene County, Tennessee, she is also a part of ETSU's Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music program as a member of the Celtic Band.

LIGHTNIN' CHARLIE: ROOTS MUSIC TRAVELING IN STYLE

Wayne Winkler

In the Tri-Cities Tennessee/Virginia, you sometimes see a black Lincoln Town Car limousine with "Lightnin' Charlie" imprinted on the sides and a license plate that reads "RHYTHM." You don't have to peer through the tinted glass in the rear of the limo to see the star; he's in the driver's seat.

"I believe that the limos have helped to improve my lot as a professional musician way more than my four previous CDs have. Truly," says "Lightnin' Charlie" Dolinger. "People who have never seen me perform, have never heard my music on radio, and have never seen me on TV, now know Lightnin' Charlie because of my limo."

Lightnin' Charlie has been a fixture of the Tri-Cities music scene for more than two decades. First with the Southside Sheiks and later fronting his own band, Lightnin' Charlie and the Upsetters, he has made recordings and built a solid regional following from the Tri-Cities to the Carolina coast and beyond. A serious scholar of the blues, Lightnin' Charlie explores many chapters in the Great American Songbook for his material.

Advertising is the main reason a journeyman entertainer like Lightnin' Charlie gets around in a limousine. "I've had t-shirts, hats, bumper stickers, jackets, cigarette lighters, and everything else with Lightnin' Charlie printed on it, but nothing does it like the Lightnin' Limo!"

There are other advantages to the limo as well. "I often use the back for a dressing room, or a place to hang out, relax, or listen to music before a gig or between sets. It's private, and it has all the comforts of home. It's my mini tour bus. I've actually had band rehearsals in the back, with acoustic guitar, acoustic bass, and my drummer playing sticks on the seats. Don't try *that* in your hybrid."

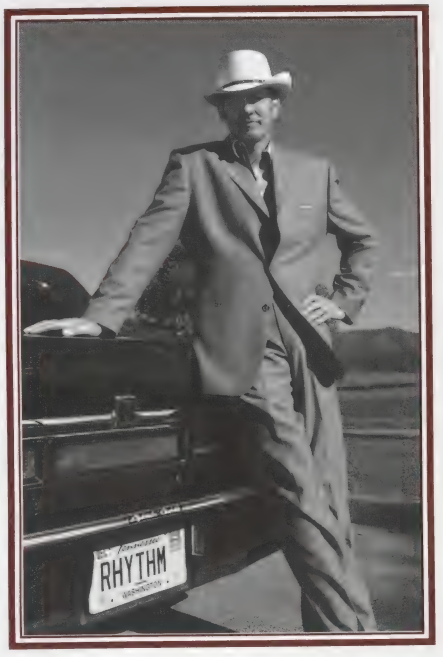
Born in Miami, Florida, Dolinger is the son of a big-band-style crooner dad and a former evangelist mom who hails from Greeneville, Tennessee. He became fascinated with music largely through the stories of an aunt, who was a close friend of Elvis Presley and the Presley family. Being enamored with the Elvis mystique, and wanting to return to the mountains his mother came from, he was determined to attend college in Tennessee. After enrolling at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City in 1979, Dolinger heard the music of blues guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan and was immediately transfigured.

"As we all know, music and education often don't mix," Dolinger recalls ruefully. But the fledgling

Lightnin' Charlie in front of his limousine. Photo courtesy Charlie Warden.

bluesman was undertaking an education of a different, less formal sort. In the early 1980s, he worked with a four-piece band, the Southside Sheiks, specializing in Chicago-style blues.

By the end of the decade, he was leading his own band, incorporating blues with the works of classic Americana artists such as Hank Williams and, of course, Elvis Presley. The band paid its dues, working at clubs, festivals, and concerts across a large portion of the United States, recording two highly touted CDs, and learning the hard realities of show business. Dolinger documented many of his exploits on his website, www.lightnincharlie.com, and in 2008 he turned his blog into a book: *Off The Record – The Trials And Tribulations Of A Travelin' Troubabdour*. The book, now in 17,000 bookstores worldwide, is a hilarious chronicle of his childhood, his faith, and his many musical misadventures. But it was the onset of family life that inspired Lightnin' Charlie to change his method of working.



After the birth of his first son, "I had to reinvent myself professionally," Charlie recalls. "I pulled the reins in a lot with traveling, because I was 'Mr. Mom'; my wife works days." He started playing almost exclusively as a solo acoustic act, but by 2005, he had quit playing at bars and nightclubs. "The venues that were out there had degenerated so terribly. What you had to go through just to play three sets in a club had gone way overboard for me." He describes some of the places he worked as "cut 'n' stabs."

"I took a leap of faith and decided to stop playing those clubs. And that's how I had made my living for almost twenty-five years. It wasn't any small thing to stop. It was like a plumber saying he wasn't going to work with water anymore."

His career was at risk, but if his decision didn't work out, he thought, "I'll just stay home and be Daddy because that's more important anyway." But a funny thing happened when Lightnin' Charlie turned away from the clubs. "Lo and behold, I started getting tons and tons of work—good gigs, better gigs, great gigs, better money, better audiences, and better hours."

These days, Charlie works primarily as a solo acoustic artist at theatres, festivals, and private parties. A chance engagement at a senior citizens center in Bristol led to another booking, then another; now Charlie plays more than 200 shows per year at senior centers.

And then came the first limousine. Dolinger had already developed a liking for vintage Cadillacs and is the proud owner of a 1962 Sedan and a 1966 Coupe, featured on the cover of his 2005 tour-de-force CD *A New Leaf*.

"I don't drive the Caddies too often because I don't want anything to happen to them and also because it costs about twenty bucks just to roll the windows down!"

But his drummer had a white 1989 Lincoln Town Car limo for sale that allegedly got 18 miles per gallon ("but never believe a drummer"). The limo actually got better mileage than his then-current ride, a Caprice Classic station wagon, and had quite a bit more eye appeal than a van.

Dolinger drove the white "Stinkin' Lincoln" for three years, then sold it ("for twice what I paid for it"), because he found "a super-clean, low-mileage, 1995 black Lincoln Town Car limo with the same killer 4.6 liter engine. I found it on eBay. It's unbelievable, inside and out. It was a one-owner, private owner, not a shuttle or a rental, and was used by its rich New Jersey owner to entertain his rich friends on weekends. I bought it about a month before our daughter Lily was born, so I got to drive her, her two brothers, and her momma home from the hospital in style."

These days Lightnin' Charlie is getting around more than ever. He's featured in a new full-length, national TV documentary entitled *Birthplace of Country Music* and plans to release two new CDs this winter, *Lightnin' Charlie Songbook—Family Album Volume Two* (the follow-up to 2009's *Trust In God—Family Album Volume One)* and *Lightnin' Charlie and the Upsetters—Live in Ninety-Five*. And his memoir, *Off The Record*, will soon be available as an audio book, so you can listen to it while you're getting around.

Lightnin' Charlie is undoubtedly one of the hardest-working ETSU grads in show business. And he's still out there, still making music, still making records, and still making tracks in his long black Lincoln limousine.

"It's been the greatest advertising for me in the world. Better than a thousand billboards." ❖

NOTES

Wayne Winkler is manager of public radio station WETS-FM in Johnson City, Tennessee.

Lightnin' Charlie. Photo courtesy Charlie Warden.

MUSIC IN BRIEF

Wayne Winkler

Justin Townes Earle
Harlem River Blues
Bloodshot Records

Earle's latest CD, released a month after his appearance on NPR's *Mountain Stage* recording at the Paramount Theatre in Bristol, Tennessee, is his third release, following his 2008 debut *The Good Life* and the much-acclaimed *Midnight at the Movies* in 2009. Reviews like this one still mention his heritage—his father is noted singer/songwriter/activist Steve Earle, and he was named after legendary songwriter Townes Van Zandt—but Earle proved himself a talented songwriter from the start and he's only getting better. *Harlem River Blues* demonstrates Earle's familiarity with a wide range of Americana sounds, from railroad ballads to honky-tonk country to gospel, and even a bit of rock and roll. Like his father, Earle has moved from Nashville to New York City, and as he told *Paste* magazine, "I drove over the Harlem River one time and it was just the most desolate-looking thing I'd ever seen . . . . It's just the nastiest body of water you've ever seen in your life. And I guess it just kind of inspired me a little bit." Earle co-produced *Harlem River Blues* with longtime friend Skylar Wilson and is joined by former Drive by Trucker Jason Isbell, Paul Niehaus from Calexico, and Ketch Secor from Old Crow Medicine Show. ❖

Robert Plant
Band of Joy
Rounder Records

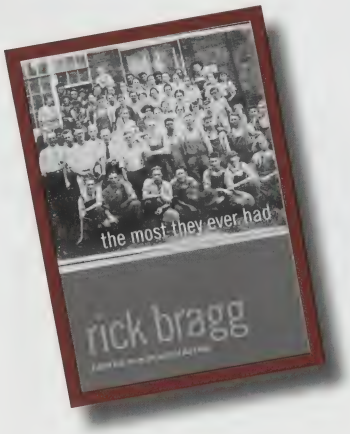
The 2007 collaboration between former Led Zeppelin frontman Robert Plant and bluegrass crooner Alison Krauss resulted in *Raising Sand* and a 2009 Grammy award for Album of the Year. With guitarist and co-producer Buddy Miller, Plant recreates that intimate, moody sound with bandmates including singer Patty Griffin, multi-instrumentalist Darrell Scott, drummer Marco Giovino, and bassist Byron House. Leading with a dark interpretation of Los Lobos' "Angel Dance," *Band of Joy* also covers Townes Van Zandt's "Harm's Swift Way" as well as the traditional spiritual "Satan Your Kingdom Must Come Down." The Kelly Brothers' 1960s soul classic "Falling in Love Again" is transformed with gospel harmonies, and the English/Appalachian ballad "Cindy I'll Marry You Someday" meshes with the drone rock of "Silver Rider" and "Monkey." The name of the disc is taken from the name of the band Plant performed with in pre-Zeppelin days, a band that included future Zeppelin drummer John Bonham and encompassed a wide range of music. The new *Band of Joy* accomplishes that goal admirably as well. ❖

Si Kahn
Courage
Strictly Country Records

Si Kahn first moved to the South forty-five years ago to join the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, a pivotal group in the Civil Rights struggle. He moved to the southern Appalachians, where he assisted coal miners at the Brookside mine in eastern Kentucky. He founded Grassroots Leadership to help ordinary people around the South and Southwest organize to protect their rights and interests. And along the way, he's built a dedicated following as a songwriter and folksinger, best known for "Aragon Mill," a song that has become a modern labor anthem. Kahn's latest release, *Courage*, finds him teamed with Kathy Mattea for a collection of songs about a Labrador Retriever who wishes he could fly, an Italian immigrant woman whose dreams of the New World are shattered by reality, coal miners in eastern Pennsylvania who form a violent organization to combat the mine owners, a cotton farmer struggling through drought, and a Spanish Civil War veteran. Si Kahn has retired from Grassroots Leadership, but he still has many musical projects to complete. As Pete Seeger said of Kahn, "He's a solid thinker who is able to humanize the political—an absolutely extraordinary guy. I hope he lives to be 120." ❖

Eilen Jewell
Butcher Holler: A Tribute to Loretta Lynn
Signature Sounds

Eilen Jewell is proud to be a Loretta Lynn fan. The guitar she uses on stage was autographed by the singer from Butcher Holler, Kentucky. Eilen (rhymes with "feelin'") usually covers one or two of Loretta's songs in her shows. In the liner notes to her new CD, Jewell writes, "A toast: to the woman with more banned songs than anyone can count; to that voice that reaches the very grain of the theater walls around her; to our national treasure. Gratitude is not enough, so I sing these songs for any who will listen." Many of the songs date from Lynn's most commercial period (an exception is the 1960 debut, "I'm a Honky Tonk Girl"), but they're not all the best-known hits. Sure, we get classics like "Don't Come Home A-Drinkin' (With Lovin' on Your Mind)," "Fist City," "You Ain't Woman Enough (To Take My Man)," and "You're Lookin' at Country." But we also get more obscure songs like "A Man I Hardly Know" and "Whispering Sea." The Boston-based Jewell doesn't sound like Loretta, but she can give these songs the proper amount of attitude, and attitude is what made Loretta Lynn—and these songs—great. ❖



The Most They Ever Had

By Rick Bragg

McAdam Cage, San Francisco, California, 2009
$23.00 (hardcover), 156 pages

The Most They Ever Had by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Rick Bragg is a slim volume containing nine chapters, eight on workers for Profile Mill in Jacksonville, Alabama, and one on the mill boss William Ivan Greenleaf. A prologue and an epilogue that focus on the author's brother Sam, a millworker, bookend the volume. Except for the one on Greenleaf, every chapter tells a story about a millhand. Each chapter, Bragg says, "tells a story of a separate life, though the sufferings they endured do run together across the pages." A friend of the author called the sometimes grim book not "a damn barn dance . . . an American tragedy." And it is a paean to southern mill workers—and perhaps to all working class persons who for so long did the dirty, unpleasant work of an industrial nation.

The title refers to the situation many working people, north and south, found themselves in: Factory work was hard, dirty, and perhaps dangerous, but it was the "best" work available. In Appalachia, agriculture had declined, and folks needed cash. The local barter systems exalted by some Appalachian scholars simply were not sufficient to allow families to support themselves or to provide the goods to give them a measure of comfort.

What holds the book together and makes it compelling are the particulars of the lives of each featured worker: dedication to the job and doing it well, willingness to risk danger (cotton dust, chemicals, asbestos exposure, noisy and dangerous machinery) to do their jobs, love for music and baseball, unionization attempts and strikes, and the toughness of women workers who toiled in the mill and then went home to care for children and husbands.

The reader meets Clay Hammett, the millworker and baseball pitcher who had a wicked curve and who played with local mill legend Bartow Hughes. There's Floria Fortenberry, who, prior to entering the mill, picked cotton, and with her friend and sister-in-law Jewell picked to exhaustion to earn the extra dollar promised each if they could pick down one row and back. There's mill boss Greenleaf—arrogant, greedy, and uncaring, who once ordered a worker to connect a live electrical wire and who prided himself on his benevolence in helping "poor mountain folk." There's Homer Barnwell, Normandy and Battle of the Bulge veteran who survived the horrors of war to come back to the mill—whose mother, on hearing he had returned from war, "'walked off the line and come home.'" And there's Odell Knight, who wanted to write his childhood memoir but whose forty-six years in the mill exposed his lungs to various machine-shop chemicals and caused, in his retirement, a severe bout with pneumonia that robbed him of his legs, one arm, and fingers on his remaining hand.

The book features only one black worker, Eula Salter, who as a child remembered looking up in wonderment at a white male worker hanging out the window (trying to get a breath, it turns out). She knew she could not enter the mill, so the place became one of mystery. In the 1970s and 1980s the mill integrated on the mill floor, and Eula entered as a worker to support her five children: "'It was a blessing for them, for my children.'" But twenty years in the mill took away 50 percent of her lung capacity. She'd tell her preacher "'to pray for me, so I can get out of there.'" Yet Eula still was proud that she finally did "'get inside.'"

The photo on the book jacket is evocative: the male workers in their coveralls and the female workers in their simple dresses, all easily distinguished from the managers in their "respectable" dress of shirts and ties. I wish there had been a few more photos, maybe one of Greenleaf and of the mill. (Additional images can be found in a Google Picasa web album.)

A paean—yes. But while Bragg admires the mill workers, he does not paint them as saints. The civil war between workers over the Depression-era strike,

the reference to the double job of the women workers, discussion of alcohol problems, the unspoken reference to race relations, the uncensored writing of Knight about the meanness of his childhood pranks all point to people—like any others—with flaws. ❖

Marie Tedesco directs the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program at ETSU. She has taught the history of Appalachia and related topics and is interested in workers in Appalachia.

The Good Spirit of Laurel Ridge

By Jesse Stuart

Jesse Stuart Foundation
Ashland, Kentucky, 2009
$24 (hardcover), 261 pages

Originally published in 1953, *The Good Spirit of Laurel Ridge* is the sixth novel by one of Kentucky's most prolific writers. Over a period of more than forty years, Jesse Stuart (1906-1984) published more than sixty books—mostly novels and collections of poems—as well as hundreds of short stories, an autobiography, and other non-fiction works, centering on his mountain homeland, especially W Hollow in Greenup County, Kentucky. His life and work have had a strong influence on the present generation of highland writers, contributing to the tradition of mountain storytelling that figures so importantly in the literary landscape of the upper South and beyond.

The Good Spirit of Laurel Ridge is not so much a plotted novel as it is an almanac of mountain life and character, a compendium of stories, folklore, natural remedies, and episodes embodied in Theopolis "Op" Akers, one of Stuart's most original and engaging characters. "Old Op" treks the woods and Laurel Ridge, regarding them as the primary manifestation of God's creation. In this upland Eden he hunts, he fishes, he gardens. The forest is his larder and his pharmacy, from which he harvests herbs and natural remedies for the health of the body and the soul. Like Thoreau, he is fiercely independent and distrustful of civilization beyond the natural world.

That world, the idyllic Laurel Ridge, is invaded first by his long-absent daughter Lucretia, who comes to tend to him during his temporary blindness following cataract surgery. She is followed by Alfred and Julia Pruitt, relatives whom he lodges in his smokehouse during their escape from Dayton, Ohio, a place plagued by the regimen of industrialized city life and a prevalent post-war fear of the "Adam bumb." Op at first accommodates these refugees but becomes increasingly uneasy with them as his idyllic life is disrupted and mysterious happenings occur—the shooting of native foxes, comings and goings of the sheriff and meddlesome neighbors, and sightings of spirits, some benign, some threatening.

So much for plot. Stuart's real interest seems to be in portraying Op Akers as an exemplar of mountain life, a man radically self-reliant and self-absorbed, attuned to the natural world and content with a life led away from the corruption, as he sees it, of cities. He is uneducated in the knowledge of books, superstitious, and contrary but admirable in his self-determination, his refusal to kowtow to convention. "There are still pockets of the earth left as God made 'em," Op says. "Fruit, nuts, and wild game left as they must have been in the beginnin'. Laurel Ridge is one of these places."

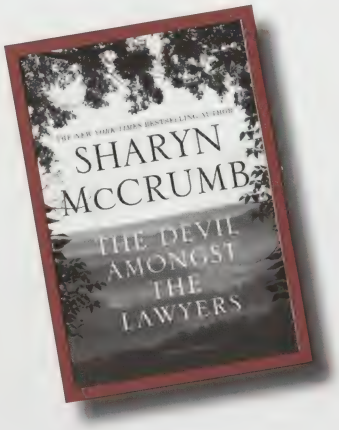
It is this theme of longing for a pristine state of nature that Stuart celebrates in the book. Some of the message is jarred, though, by his use of dialect, a means of literary expression now regarded as stilted and quaint, stereotyping highlanders in a time when most Americans, for better or worse, speak the common tongue of the media:

'Somebody stood right out there on the ridge betwixt the cabin and the sty the other night and whistled,' Op said. 'We've never heard sicha purty whistlin'.' I told Lutie it probably wasn't ye, Hootbird. It was too purty.

Stuart is at his best when he relies on his nature imagery to accent his love of the mountains. Op makes reference to cloud walking, wishing the valleys in his county were spanned by cloud bridges so people could walk from hilltop to hilltop on level ground. Or when he draws on the natural world to impart homely wisdom. Op regards crabgrass, for example, as part of God's plan "to make men and wimmen use a little elbow grease and backbone strength with a hoe."

Behind his gruff exterior, Op is a reincarnation of Jean Jacques Rousseau's natural man, an innocent who practices simple virtue and wants nothing more than to be left alone. Ultimately, the strength of Stuart's book is not its insight into character supported by a plot charged with page-turning suspense but its evocation of place, the authority with which he communicates his understanding of a people, a place, and the things that bind them in sharing a common destiny. ❖

Richard Taylor lives in Frankfort, Kentucky. He is Kenan Visiting Writer at Transylvania University in Lexington.



The Devil Amongst the Lawyers

By Sharyn McCrumb

Thomas Dunne Books (imprint of St. Martin's Press)
New York, 2010
$24.99 (hardcover), 336 pages

The prologue of Sharyn McCrumb's latest entry in her "Ballad Novel" series, *The Devil Amongst the Lawyers,* recounts a story offered to practically every newcomer to the Tri-Cities area of Tennessee (Johnson City, Kingsport, Bristol), the 1916 hanging of Big Mary, an elephant who killed an inexperienced trainer during a circus parade. When told to newcomers, the story is treated like a tale about an embarrassing family member, getting it out of the way in a self-deferential manner while controlling it, assuring the newcomer that such forthrightness implies a promise in turn that the teller consciously labors to overcome any associated stigma.

McCrumb tells the story, however, from the perspective of a veteran local reporter who credits himself for instigating the hanging, bragging about the influence he could wield by suggesting to the circus owner how newspaper stories preserve and destroy businesses. McCrumb defuses the stereotypes about the community by focusing on the mercenary nature of the journalism industry.

The Devil Amongst the Lawyers pursues this theme in its depiction of the coverage of a Wise County, Virginia, murder trial in the Depression Era. The significance of the trial and even notions of justice fall secondary to the concerns of syndicated journalists to provide a story of high drama, sensation, and romance. McCrumb's account of the killing itself reveals its mundane, pitiful nature, and we spend hardly any time in the courtroom at all, exposed to only a limited amount of testimony. We instead focus on four journalists, three of them outsiders already composing stories well before they have heard any of the testimony, and the remaining one a Tri-Cities native who aspires to join the ranks of the powerful, syndicated reporters.

The reader may find none of them particularly sympathetic. Henry Jernigan, the star reporter of the case, so insulates himself from his personal miseries that he considers admirable cultures almost magical and denigrated cultures fit only for conforming to mainstream standards. Rose Hanelon writes "sob sister" stories and conducts herself as if she has become worldly and knowledgeable, but reveals herself to be just as driven by romantic notions as her deluded readers. Shade Baker, the outsider with the most empathy for the Southern Appalachian people, nonetheless determines to profit from them. And even Carl Jenkins, from nearby Johnson City, sees journalism as a means to leave his home in hopes of never returning. As Nora Bonesteel's older cousin,

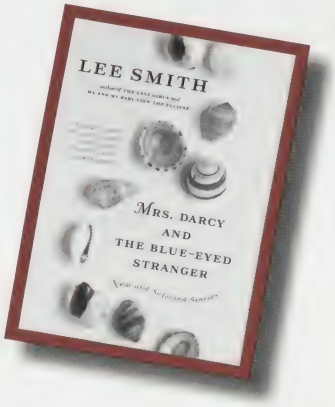
Carl will immediately garner the sympathies readers of McCrumb's "Ballad Novels" have for Nora herself, but his actions and motivations in his treatment of Nora, particularly his attempts to exploit her gift of "the Sight" (an extrasensory ability to experience influences most cannot perceive), will challenge that sympathy.

Some readers may be put off by the novel's structure, since it shifts primarily between the time of the trial and Henry Jernigan's sojourn in Japan, many years before. As a young political dilettante, Jernigan has published some unfavorable material in the wake of World War I, and his wealthy parents protect him from legal consequences by sending him overseas. Jernigan interprets Japan as almost a magical wonderland—the repeated references to the "elfin" populace suggest his blindness to common characteristics between him and his hosts—but being orphaned by a flu epidemic in the States and facing natural disasters in Japan engender his insulated effeteness. He never questions his superiority to the Appalachian people, at least as he imagines them in his reliance on stereotype and willful ignorance, and he openly states that the most expedient process of elevating them is to ridicule them until the younger generations turn from their folkways.

While a later encounter with Nora Bonesteel leads to his being able to integrate his experiences, we receive hints of that vital change only secondhand. McCrumb provides a foundation for Jernigan's redemption, even permitting him to sense the influence of "the Sight" in young Nora, and one wishes McCrumb had built upon that foundation more. Jernigan seems a far more important and engaging character than the nominal hero, Jenkins, after all; Baker makes a worthy foil to him, and by contrast Scanlon's selfishness makes Jernigan's ill-tended idealism a noble characteristic.

The Devil Amongst the Lawyers is not the "Ballad Novel" many readers will expect. McCrumb offers warm, real depictions of Appalachian culture—a passage featuring a discussion of the journalistic coverage of the Floyd Collins cave death, the section where well-to-do Knoxville ladies club members come to examine the treatment of the young murder suspect, and the contemporary epilogue where Nora Bonesteel meets a young relative demonstrate McCrumb's power on this theme. But the novel is more about a man's coming to recognize common humanity across cultures. The wavering focus on Henry Jernigan compromises the strength of McCrumb's work. ❖

Thomas Alan Holmes lives with his family in Johnson City, Tennessee, where he writes and teaches as a member of the Literature and Language Department of East Tennessee State University. His work has appeared in *The Appalachian Journal, The South Atlantic Review, Now & Then, and The Black Warrior Review.*



Mrs. Darcy and the Blue-Eyed Stranger: New and Selected Stories

Lee Smith

Algonquin Books
Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 2010
$23.95 (hardcover), 352 pages

This wonderful collection consists of fourteen stories by prominent and prolific Appalachian writer Lee Smith. Although best known as a novelist, she has produced three previous volumes of short fiction, and seven of the stories in *Mrs. Darcy* come from these works; the other seven are collected here for the first time after initial publication in journals or magazines during the past decade. These stories, taken together, provide a full and compelling overview of Smith's long career and demonstrate not only her evolution as an artist but also her consistent focus on characters hailing from or living in the Mountain South. These characters "get around in" or get out of the Appalachian region as best they can, and Smith unfailingly treats them with understanding, dignity, and individuality. The many distinctive first-person or limited omniscient voices constitute one of the book's greatest strengths. Another more subtle strength comes from Smith's always keen grasp of the craft of short fiction. Her short stories do not follow the Hemingway model of compressed action and understated tension. Instead, their power emerges through a "continuous thread of revelation," and Smith

appropriately includes this observation by Eudora Welty as part of the epigraph.

No doubt, a "thread of revelation" runs throughout the stories presented here. It emerges in "Between the Lines," an early work from the collection *Cakewalk* (1980), in which Mrs. Jolene B. Newhouse writes her fortnightly newspaper column not to reveal the "mere facts" but instead to indicate "what's most important" in the life of her rural community and its residents, all the "pain and loving, mystery and loss." Likewise, in one of the book's true gems, "The Happy Memories Club" from *News of the Spirit* (1997), the elderly, wheelchair-bound protagonist, Alice Scully, comes to realize "how many people we can love, how various we are." By the time Alice reaches this epiphany late in the story, the reader understands and feels a powerful empathy. These two stories also highlight Smith's career-long concern with the experiences of older women, a group often marginalized or sentimentalized in popular fiction but treated here with full complexity and respect. Another of the collection's memorable works, "Tongues of Fire" from *Me and My Baby View the Eclipse* (1990), demonstrates Smith's equal ability to recreate convincingly the memories of a child as filtered through the consciousness of a now adult character. In this story, Karen Graffenreid recalls with remarkable immediacy the events of her thirteenth year, as her family disintegrates and she begins speaking in "tongues of fire" to escape a feeling of invisibility and gain some sense of certainty in a shifting world.

Several new stories in *Mrs. Darcy* merit special mention as well. The book's penultimate piece, "Stevie and Mama," proves one of Smith's best short fictions yet. As the late middle-aged Roxy grapples with the discovery of her much-loved husband's infidelity, she gradually reveals the tragedy and deep grief at the center of their life together—both to herself and to the reader. Her final decision to honor the power of love and compassion rings absolutely true.

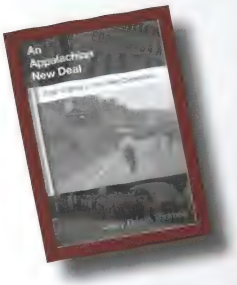
"House Tour," another story about marriage, family, infidelity, and aging, also stands out as does "Toastmaster" (one of Smith's few stories without a direct connection to Appalachia). In this piece, a precocious eleven-year-old boy discovers his vocation as a stand-up comedian during a riotous evening at a Key West restaurant.

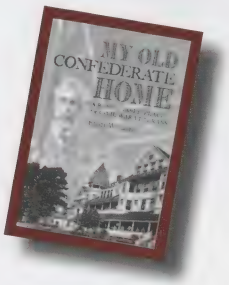
Other stories, like "Fried Chicken" or "Folk Art," don't quite reach the level of the book's best works, and the decision to place the title story (from *Cakewalk*) at the collection's end proves a bit disappointing. After the emotional power of "The Happy Memories Club" and "Stevie and Mama" (the previous two stories), the early "Mrs. Darcy Meets the Blue-Eyed Stranger" seems rather slight. However, these result precisely because of the high quality of this fine collection. Its stories provide a real pleasure both for seasoned readers of Lee Smith's fiction and for those coming to her work for the first time. ❖

Martha Billips teaches literature at Transylvania University in Kentucky, where she also directs the first-year seminar program, Foundations of the Liberal Arts, and serves as chair of the Division of Humanities.

BOOKS IN BRIEF

Edwina Pendarvis

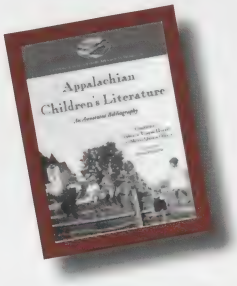


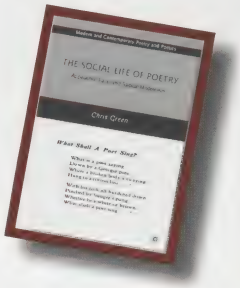


An Appalachian New Deal: West Virginia in the Great Depression
Jerry Bruce Thomas (West Virginia University Press, 2010)

My Old Confederate Home: A Respectable Place for Civil War Veterans
Rusty Williams (University Press of Kentucky, 2010)

An Appalachian New Deal examines public assistance to West Virginia's casualties of the Great Depression; and *My Old Confederate Home*, set in Kentucky, examines efforts on behalf of an earlier group of casualties, Confederate soldiers crippled by the Civil War. Soldiers who fought for the Confederacy were regarded by the federal government as "war foes" and were therefore owed nothing for their military service. As these veterans aged, many ended up jobless and homeless. *My Old Confederate Home* tells the history of one facet of Kentucky's treatment of these veterans: the successful effort by ex-Confederate associations, the Commonwealth, and private citizens to open and operate a veterans home, offering these soldiers a degree of dignity and comfort at the end of their lives. *An Appalachian New Deal* describes federal and state relief programs and their effects on impoverished West Virginians who had lost their jobs or farms—programs that, in less than a decade, brought food, shelter, clothing, medical and dental care, and monthly wages to over 44,000 West Virginia youths in return for their labor conserving natural resources and improving public buildings and infrastructure. Thomas' account of the New Deal in West Virginia presents a carefully documented, closely reasoned, critical perspective on his subject. Williams' account, research-based as well, is more personal and sympathetic, acknowledging the sentimentalism in the romance of the "Lost Cause" (a romance that motivated much support for the Confederate Home), but downplaying the element of racism that helped fuel that romance. ❖

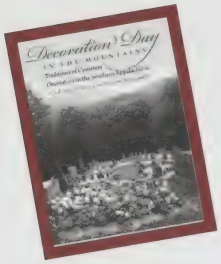




Appalachian Children's Literature: An Annotated Bibliography
Roberta Teague Herrin and Sheila Quinn Oliver (McFarland, 2010)

The Social Life of Poetry: Appalachia, Race, and Radical Modernism
Chris Green (Palgrave MacMillan, 2010)

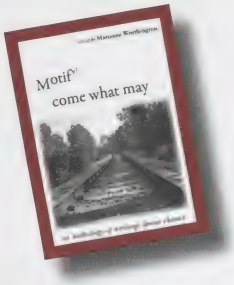
"What we read is a critical ingredient in how we think and who we are," says George Ella Lyon in her Foreword to *Appalachian Children's Literature*; and both this bibliography and Chris Green's *Social Life of Poetry* add to our understanding of how books have formed popular concepts of who Appalachians are. The historical scope of *Appalachian Children's Literature* is broad, with annotations for books published as early as the 1700s on up to 2007. *The Social Life of Poetry,* which won the 2010 Weatherford Award in nonfiction, digs deep, focusing on the late 1800s through the mid-1900s. The Appalachians implicit in Herrin and Oliver's bibliography are a diverse and increasingly urbane people (Daniel Boone, meet "Cool Papa" Bell). The modernist image of the "white mountaineer" in Green's book is presented with regard to its role in redefining other marginalized groups (Jews, African Americans, Southerners, and immigrants) and as an image constructed by a motley assortment of players, including four major Appalachian poets, a leftist poet from New York, publishing houses, Berea College, Lincoln Memorial University, and, further back, the American Missionary Association. Herrin and Oliver's bibliographic selections and annotations show an Appalachia that has expanded over time, in terms of both geography and social complexity. Green's book shows a complex of national and regional relationships among poetry, publishing, social movements, higher education, and who we think we are. Both books are full of surprises—and much more fun to read than you might expect from annotated bibliographies and archival research. ❖

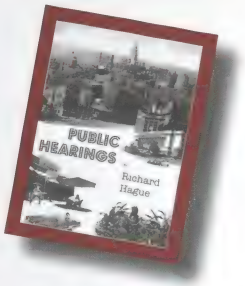


Cornbread Nation 5: The Best of Southern Food Writing
Fred W. Sauceman, Editor; John T. Edge, General Editor (University of Georgia Press, 2010)

Decoration Day in the Mountains: Traditions of Cemetery Decoration in the Southern Appalachians
Alan Jabbour and Karen Singer Jabbour (University of North Carolina Press, 2010)

"Funerals and death do make people squeamish," Kathleen Purvis remarks in her essay on funeral food in *Cornbread Nation*. But burial customs, like food customs, are key elements in defining cultures. *Cornbread Nation*, the fifth volume in a series of writing on Southern foodways, shows what editor Fred Sauceman calls "an evolving South . . . of ever-changing ethnicities and attitudes." *Decoration Day in the Mountains* describes burial and grave-decoration traditions in western North Carolina. The essays, poems, and photos of the foodways anthology and the participant-observer narrative and photos of the Jabbours' book emphasize the communal nature of foodways and memorializing customs. In *Cornbread Nation*, friends and family gather for annual Easter egg fights in Tennessee, fans place pizzas at the feet of singer Louis Prima, and an old recipe recalls a memory of emancipated African Americans sharing cornbread and tales of "Aunt Harriet" Tubman. In *Decoration Day in the Mountains*, families and friends visit as they weed, remound, and decorate graves with flowers and mementos. Neither book neglects the effect of politics on customs. In "Eating My Heart Out," Beth Ann Fennelly tells how her enjoyment of an extravagant meal at the moment that Hurricane Katrina hits New Orleans made her more conscious of grim differences in people's access to wholesome food. Politics enters the cemetery gates too, as *Decoration Day in the Mountains* reports in a section on Fontana Dam and the "road to nowhere," an unfinished road supposed to make visiting old cemeteries easy despite the new lake in the way. Both books pay tribute to the intriguingly exotic or comfortably homey customs Appalachians use to imbue life and death with meaning. ❖





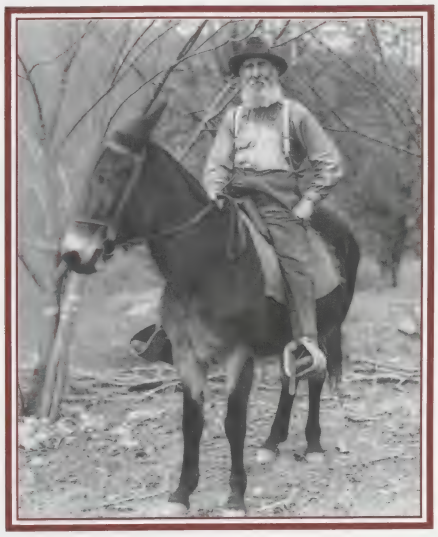
Motif v2 Come What May: An Anthology of Writings about Chance
Marianne Worthington, Editor (Motes Books, 2010)

Public Hearings
Richard Hague (Word Press, 2009)

Chance predominates as the main character in these two poetry collections. The anthology, *Come What May*, with poems, stories, and essays by "136 writers from the United States and four other countries" presents Chance as a kaleidoscopic, multi-form, often fascinating, manifestation. In *Public Hearings*, Dick Hague focuses his intellectual savvy and poetic talent on Chance in a political sense—how the odds are stacked against some groups at this stage in our developing, and deteriorating, political economy. The poetry in Hague's book brings schools, local governments, and other institutions up for indictment for their role in guaranteeing the failure of so many people they're supposed to help. His poem, "Riot," set in Cincinnati's Over the Rhine district—at one time a "hillbilly" enclave, now home mostly to African Americans—includes a hauntingly compelling line that sums up the treacherously symbiotic destructiveness that comes from shutting off people's chances: "Riot rides shotgun, wary, wordless, with the Chief of Police." Worthington's editorial selections for *Come What May* offer a carnival of poetry and prose about bad luck, happenstance, coincidence, fate, and good fortune. Capturing something of what both books suggest is most valuable in human experience is Jimmy Dean Smith's story, "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee," in *Come What May*. With its unlikely juxtaposition of Chuck E. Cheese and Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, the story implies that what is most valuable in our brief lives is the recognition of our shared vulnerability and, in our awareness of our shared condition, the giving and receiving of pleasure, aid, and comfort—things these books themselves seek to provide. ❖

GET LOW

Brad Lifford



One sure method of learning what people truly think of you is to overhear the conversations after you leave a room. Better still would be to overhear what people say after you exit the mortal world altogether—were it not for the practical hurdle of death getting in the way.

More than seventy years ago, a hermit who lived in Roane County, Tennessee, pondered that conundrum and found the solution. Felix "Bush" Breazeale, of the Dogwood Community, decided to hold his funeral before his death, and his novel idea drew thousands of mourners and made national news.

Called "Uncle Bush" by those who knew him, Breazeale even built his own walnut coffin. On the day of the funeral, June 26, 1938, he sat beside the coffin, listened to songs and a funeral sermon fit for the occasion, greeted well-wishers, and enjoyed an earthly look at a heavenly send-off. A reported 8,000 people converged on Roane County for the celebration.

The story has echoed down through the decades ever since, kept alive by family members of those involved. Recently, Hollywood told the Uncle Bush tale in the movie *Get Low*, starring Robert Duvall as the man dubbed "the living corpse."

Larry Robinson heard the story countless times through the years and isn't surprised that Hollywood finally came calling, since the event attracted national attention.

"It was kind of an unusual thing in that day and age," says Robinson, who lives in Maryville. "They put out a press release from the funeral home to the Knoxville newspaper, and it caught hold and went out on the AP wire, went all over the United States, spread all the way to the West Coast.

"There wasn't any TV then, and there was a pittance of entertainment on radio. Everybody from miles around came for the funeral."

Few who are living would know the story better than Robinson, because his father was with Uncle Bush several steps along the way that day, starting with driving the hearse. Buddy Robinson was the son-in-law of Frank Quinn, the funeral home director who was approached by Breazeale with the odd idea of a pre-death funeral.

"After Granddad recovered from the initial shock of Uncle Bush telling him he wanted to have his funeral before he died, he agreed and said he'd be glad to help with the funeral," Robinson says. Quinn worked with Bush on the press release, and the event grew into a national spectacle.

No other person had the vantage point enjoyed by Buddy Robinson. He drove Breazeale to the funeral and was a pallbearer. When mourners thrust their programs

FILM

"Uncle Bush" Breazeale. Photo courtesy Larry Robinson.

through the windows of the hearse and asked Breazeale to autograph funeral fans, it was Buddy Robinson who obliged them with an autograph from Uncle Bush.

"I don't think the old gentleman could write,"

Larry Robinson says.

Later, an extended family member of Robinson's decided to turn the story into a movie script.

"Robert Duvall was interested early on," Robinson says, "and he kept pushing for it until they finally got enough backers to make it."

Robinson and his brother, Steve, are among family members who received parts as extras in the movie's funeral scene, and he met and spoke with the film's director, Aaron Schneider, along with Duvall and Bill Murray, who plays Quinn. Lucas Black—perhaps best known for his precocious work in the short-lived TV show *American Gothic*—portrays Buddy.

Get Low takes liberties with the story and the characters. Quinn is portrayed by Murray as a down-on-his-luck funeral director, who, needing business, sensationalizes the funeral. That rankled Robinson at first. "My granddaddy was a very ethical man," he says.

But Robinson later came to accept the Hollywood liberties. He saw the movie twice and enjoyed it.

Family loyalties and Hollywood fable-making aside, *Get Low* is an engrossing film for one reason in particular: Robert Duvall.

He has been a pillar of American cinema for forty years, and the gravity he brings to the role of the enigmatic Bush could well bring about his second Oscar. It's his most memorable performance on the big screen since *Tender Mercies*.

Since Hollywood strives to deliver more comfort and resolution than real life tends to offer, *Get Low* creates a neat answer for a puzzling question that was never resolved: Why?

"Everybody asks that question," Robinson says. "Nobody knows for sure."

Get Low suggests Breazeale was troubled by a lost love (played by Sissy Spacek), but the most likely reason he yearned to know the opinion that others held of him, Robinson says, stems from an unsolved murder around the turn of the twentieth century.

"He was accused of shooting a man in the back, but he was not indicted," Robinson says. "My father always thought that may have been the reason, that it may have been in the back of his mind, and he had kind of isolated himself because of that. But it's pure supposition on anybody's part."

Some even thought Bush would use his funeral to talk about the murder and the controversy surrounding it. But he didn't speak.

An otherwise unremarkable life did become luminous for a short time after the funeral. Bush became not only a local celebrity—being asked to appear at county fairs and sporting events—but also something of a national one, too. He traveled to New York to appear on a radio show hosted by Robert Ripley of "Believe It or Not" fame.

Bush would eventually return to a quiet life on his farm. He didn't want a fuss made when he actually did die, wrote Snyder E. Roberts in *The Story of Oliver Springs, TN, And Its People, Vol. III*. Bush died at age seventy-nine in 1943. After a small service, he was buried in Cave Creek Cemetery. ❖

Brad Lifford is the film editor for *Now & Then* magazine.

Robert Duvall and Bill Murray in a scene from Get Low. *Photo courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics.*

REMEMBERING PATRICIA NEAL

BRAD LIFFORD

When an actor who has enjoyed an accomplished career dies, media accounts often assign context to the loss through a lens trained on career high points—signature roles, Academy awards, Tony awards, box office draw.

Patricia Neal had a career of magnitude. She won an Oscar. She was beautiful. She filled the screen with presence. She was a celebrated stage actress, a Tony winner.

But as much as anything, the trip she planned before she died offers remarkable insight into Patricia Neal. Before her August 9, 2010, death from lung cancer at her home in Massachusetts, she intended to visit the coal mining ghost camp of Packard, Kentucky, where she was born, followed by a stop in Knoxville, Tennessee, to see the city where she grew up, and later, a visit to Barter Theatre, the renowned stage in Abingdon, Virginia, where she got her start.

"Truly, she never forgot where she came from and the things that happened along the way to make her a success," says Rick Rose, artistic director at Barter.

Though he was not at Barter when a Knoxville High School student named Patricia Neal began earnest pursuit of her dream, Rose came to know Neal well. She returned to Barter whenever she was asked, or just to visit and resurrect memories of her days there as an apprentice actress in the early 1940s.

Rose regarded Neal as a personal friend and admired her for her acting talent. But when asked for an indelible memory of her, he relates something that has nothing to do with acting.

"I remember we were in Richmond together, and we were staying at the Jefferson Hotel; I was co-hosting an event with her. She spent a great amount of time talking to the people who worked there, servants and other hotel employees, asking them about their families and their lives. Two years later, we were back there together for another event, and the people she had spoken with two years earlier, she remembered their names, she remembered their wives, remembered what they had told her their kids were doing.

"The great thing about her is that she genuinely cared. She wasn't asking to be polite. It's not that often that you come to know someone, stars or anyone else, with a true kind of ingrained graciousness."

Even at a young age, Neal demonstrated that graciousness. Classmates noticed it. Edwin Meeks, who later became a pediatrician in Johnson City, Tennessee, was a classmate with Neal at Knoxville High School when he was a sophomore. Neal, then a senior, shared the same homeroom assignment as Meeks.

"She was attractive and energetic and as enthusiastic as she appeared in the movies," Dr. Meeks says. "The fact that we went to the same high school gave

Patricia Neal. Photo courtesy Barter Theatre.

me a special interest in her movies; I particularly enjoyed her in *Sergeant York*."

Still, Dr. Meeks said he did not get to know Neal personally: "She really wasn't present in class that often," he says with a gentle laugh.

Neal was already stalking an acting career. She first joined Barter in 1942 and honed her acting skills in a handful of plays. By 1947, she had already won a Tony Award, for a supporting role in *Another Part of the Forest.*

Her career and personal life contained many highs, though there were rough spots in both and tragedy in the latter.

Two years after her Tony Award, she starred with Gary Cooper in a movie adapted from Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* and fell in love with the married Cooper. Though she never overcame her love for Cooper, Neal did marry British novelist Roald Dahl in 1953, and the two stayed together for thirty years. But they lost a daughter, one of their five children, to measles, and a son suffered brain damage in a tragic accident. The two divorced after Neal learned that Dahl had an affair with a family friend.

As an actress, Neal had a remarkable talent for exuding sensuality and strength tempered with an underlying vulnerability, and that talent is displayed well in *A Face in the Crowd*, a masterful 1957 film with Andy Griffith, who played a vacuous but charismatic vagabond she manufactures into a media star.

Neal reached the height of her film career in 1963 by winning an Oscar for her performance as a housekeeper in *Hud*, but what she accomplished later in her career is even more impressive.

Neal suffered a series of strokes in 1965. Through a remarkable rehabilitation in a Knoxville hospital—she became a staunch supporter of the rehabilitation center that now bears her name—she resumed her career. By 1967, she had recovered enough to turn down the role of Mrs. Robinson in *The Graduate*. A year later, she received another Oscar nomination, for *The Subject Was Roses*.

Neal originated the role of Olivia Walton in the movie that served as the pilot for the television series *The Waltons*. Many of her more substantial roles in the 1970s were, in fact, on TV.

But if you ask Rick Rose about Neal's talent as an actress, he does not point to *Hud* or *Breakfast at Tiffany's* or *The Subject Was Roses*. He quickly draws on

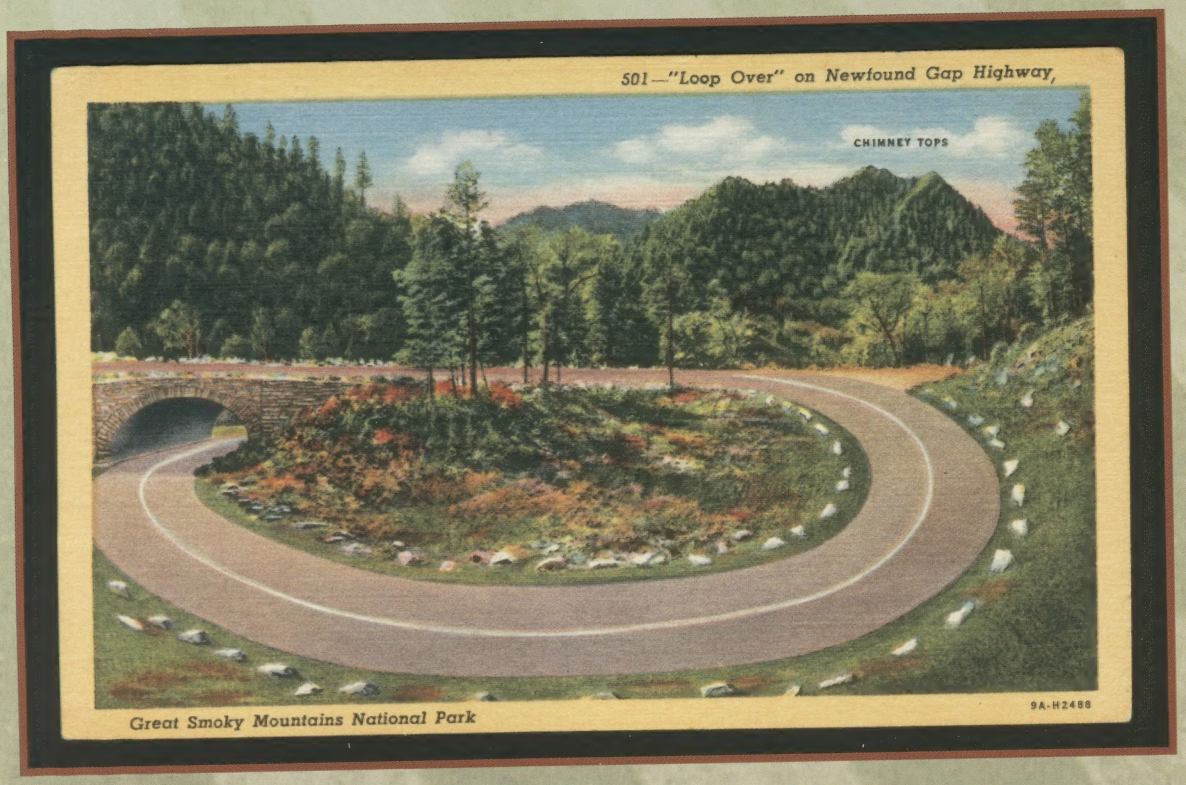
one of Neal's last roles, in Robert Altman's 1999 comedy *Cookie's Fortune*. Altman had a talent for drawing the best performers in Hollywood to his movies.

"She had that wonderful sexuality and charisma, and even greater than that, she was a tremendous, tremendous actress," Rose says. "In point of fact, watch *Cookie's Fortune*. She's incredible in that film, and she's in it with an incredible bunch of actors, and she's one of the most electric people in that film, even though she was in it for a relatively short number of scenes. That was an indication of how strong she was as an actress." ❖

Brad Lifford is the film editor for *Now & Then*.

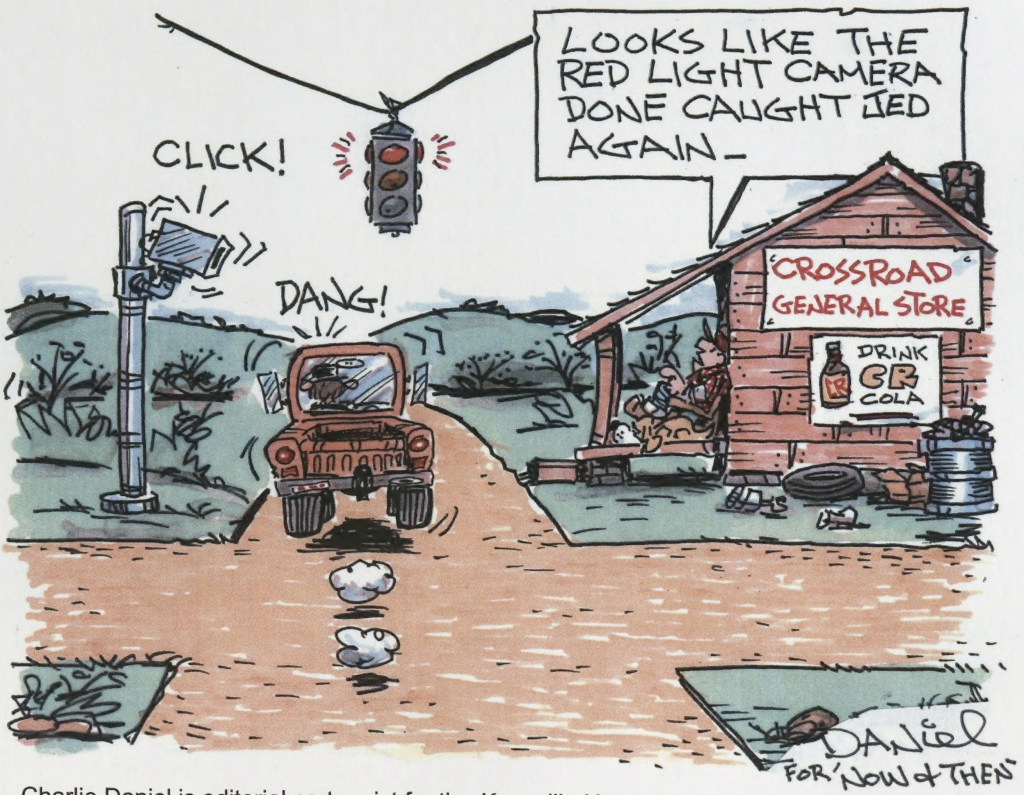
Patricia Neal sitting in her home by the fireplace. Photo by Ivan Scott, courtesy of Barter Theatre.

SIGNING OFF



Newfound Gap Road (i.e., US 441 from Gatlinburg, Tennessee, to Cherokee, North Carolina) is the only route that completely crosses the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. To experience "getting around" in full measure, Newfound Gap Road offers "the loop." Located at about the seven-mile point from Gatlinburg, the loop was not part of the original road through the park, but was added as an upgrade to meet Park Service standards.

We will be back around in June 2011 with the summer issue, "The Greening of Appalachia." Until then, thank you for continued commitment to this magazine and to Appalachia.



Charlie Daniel is editorial cartoonist for the *Knoxville News Sentinel*.

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East Tennessee State University
Center for Appalachian Studies and Services
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